



ORODES II

ORODES II (r. 58/57-37 BCE), king of Parthia, son of Phraates III (r. 70-57 BCE), and father of Phraates IV (q.v.). During his reign, the empire of the Arsacids (q.v.) reached the zenith of its power and scored significant victories against Rome.

Orodes II versus Mithradates III. In 58/57 BCE, the Parthian king Phraates III was murdered by his sons Orodes (Parth. *wrwd*, read as Worōd by Schmitt, no. 573, or Wirōd/Wirōy by Livshits, nos. 676-677) and Mithradates III (Debevoise, pp. 76-120; Bivar, 1983a, pp. 48-56; Karras-Klapproth, pp. 104-109; Wolski, 1993, pp. 127-40; Olbrycht, 1998, pp. 115-17; Lerouge, 2007, pp. 63-98). The latter, who had been co-regent and ruler of Greater Media during his father's lifetime, assumed power after Phraates III (Justin, *Epit.* 42.4.1; Dio Cassius, 39.56.2; Appian, *Syr.* 51). Phraates III's last Babylonian document is dated to March/April 58 BCE (Sachs no. 1184; Del Monte, p. 257). Shortly after the murder of Phraates III (late in 58 or in 57), Orodes II challenged his brother Mithradates III, assembled a large armed force, and deposed him (Debevoise, pp. 75-78). Justin (*Epit.* 42.4.1) claims that Mithradates was expelled by "the senate because of his cruelty" (cf. Dio Cassius, 39.56.2; Appian, *Syr.* 51).

During his father's life, Orodes seems to have been particularly associated with eastern Parthia, the Sūrēn clan, and perhaps with the Indo-Scythians (q.v.) as well. It seems that Orodes II married, perhaps even before enthronement, a princess of the Indo-Scythians, who bore Phraates IV. The eldest son of Orodes II, Pacorus I (Parth. *pkwr*/Pakur, see Livshits, no. 419; Schmitt, no. 328), seems to have been the offspring of another consort who



was from the eastern fringes of Parthia. In the fratricidal war of 58/57-55 BCE between Mithradates III and Orodes II, the decisive role was played by clans and tribes that had originally come from the steppes and settled in Bactria (q.v.) and eastern Iran, as often happened under the Sinatruclid Parthian kings (Olbrycht, 1997, pp. 46-48; 1998, pp. 110-15). Mithradates III had the support of Greater Media and metropolises of Babylonia, but was banished by Orodes II and some magnates. Perhaps the reason for this was his intention to wage war against Armenia, which apparently was not a popular prospect (Justin, *Epit.* 42.4.1). But decisive was the pressure from Orodes' faction.

In 57 BCE, Mithradates took refuge in the Roman province of Syria, which was governed by Aulus Gabinius (Cicero, *Dom.* 60 and 124), proconsul in 57-54 (Dio Cassius, 39.56.1-3; cf. Dobiáš, 1931, p. 242; Debevoise, pp. 76-77; Ziegler, p. 32; Arnaud; Lerouge, 2007, pp. 63-67). At Mithradates' instigation, Gabinius made plans for an intervention in Parthia and even crossed the Euphrates (Josephus, *AJ* 14.98, *BJ* 1.175; Dio Cassius 39.56.1-3; Appian *Syr.* 51; Strabo 12.3.34, 17.1.11; cf. Arnaud, p. 17), but in the end he changed his mind and went into Egypt in 56 BCE, bribed by Ptolemy XII Auletes, king of Egypt (Josephus, *AJ* 14.98-104, *BJ* 1.175, 178; Appian, *Syr.* 51; Plutarch, *Vit. Ant.* 3.2), or on Pompey's order (Dio Cassius, 39.56.3). Mithradates stayed for some time in Gabinius' camp with a dignitary named Orsanes (Karras-Klapproth, pp. 111-12). Even though he had no assistance from the Romans, he entered Mesopotamia and around 55 BCE took Babylon and Seleucia on the Tigris (q.v., CTESIPHON; Dio Cassius, 39.56.2-3; Appian, *Syr.* 51; Josephus, *AJ* 14.98-104, *BJ* 1.175, 178; cf. Strabo, 12.3.34, 17.1.11; Justin, *Epit.* 42.4.2). However, he was not able to keep hold of these cities for long because of a strong response from the adherents of Orodes, with a key contribution from the Sūrēn clan and its leader, called in Roman sources Surenas (Karras-Klapproth, pp. 165-71). Surenas played a special part in the taking of Seleucia, "having been the first to mount its walls, and having routed his opponents with his own hand" (Plutarch, *Vit. Crass.* 21.8). Then Mithradates and the city of Babylon surrendered, and the king was murdered by Orodes (Justin, *Epit.* 42.4.1-4). The death of Mithradates III took place late in 55 (see Dio Cassius 40.12.1 with Debevoise, p. 78).

Mithradates' reign is poorly known from written evidence, but important details are provided by coins (S40 and S41). A large number of S40 and S41 coins were included in a coin hoard of some 700 Parthian drachms (and a number of pieces of silver jewelry) of the first century BCE discovered in

Kuhdašt near Khorramabad in Lorestan (western Iran). The hoard was hidden exactly during the civil war between Orodes II and Mithradates III, circa 56-55 BCE (Thompson et al. 1815; Weiskopf, 1981).

A considerable part of Mithradates III's coinage comes from his co-regency with his father Phraates III (Nikitin, p. 16; Vardanyan, pp. 116-17). Some scholars have suggested that most of the S40 coins should be ascribed to Orodes II (Sellwood and Simonetta), which seems partly speculative. Another question that remains open is whether Orodes minted coins during his father's lifetime, which would suggest that he was somehow a viceroy in eastern Parthia. Nikitin (p. 17, n. 8) claims that some issues of Orodes were minted during the lifetime of his father Phraates III, e.g., S43.9 (with T=Traxiane?) and S43.8 (with M=Margiane?).

The coinage of Orodes II and Arsacid kingship. Orodes II's minting houses issued millions of coins (S42-S48; coin hoards, Olbrycht, 1998, p. 129). On his early issues Orodes II (S42) is presented in the company of the goddess Nike (see INVESTITURE ii.). Subsequently, Nike disappears from his coinage, and her place is taken by the symbol of the crescent and stars (S46, S47, S48). The lunar and astral symbolism reflected the cosmic notion of power entertained by the Arsacids. The usual titulature of Orodes was *Basileos Basileon Arsakou Euergetou Dikaiou Epiphanous Philhellenos*, "Of the King of Kings, Arsaces, Beneficent, Just, (god) Manifest, Philhellene." The later coins of Orodes II show him with a wart on his brow (Sellwood, 1983, p. 290; Hart; Todman). This feature acquired the meaning of a guarantee of Arsacid descent in the Sinatruclid branch of the Arsacids.

Coins of Orodes, some of them countermarked, circulated in Bactria (see S91.6; S91.10; Gorin, p. 108). A coin hoard including twenty drachms of Orodes was found at Mohmand Border in Gandhara (q.v.) in the Indo-Scythian area (Pakistan: Thompson et al. 1859). Reasons for the rapid influx of coins of Orodes II into Armenia and Southern Caucasia (Iberia, Albania [q.v.]) are linked with Arsacid predominance in the Artaxiad kingdom under Orodes II (see ARTAXIAS I). A recent catalogue lists eighteen sites in Armenia with finds of drachms and bronze coins of Orodes II. There are also finds of coins of Mithradates III (Mousheghian et al., pp. 13-14). So far, 155 drachms of Orodes II have been found in Georgia (Sherozia and Doyen, cat. nos. 103-257). In contrast, only twenty coins of the next king, Phraates IV, were discovered (Sherozia and Doyen, pp. 10-12). It seems that it was Orodes II who included Iberia into the circle of kingdoms dependent on Parthia. Coin



circulation in Albania was much more limited, but coins of Orodes II were used also in that country (five coins of Orodes II were discovered in the Mingechaur area in the Kura basin; see Rajabli, pp. 17-18; Seïfeddini et al., p. 58).

Remarkably, Mithradates and Orodes abandoned Phraates III's tradition and did not have the tiara in their image, but just used the diadem. A dagger with a four-lobed scabbard began to be displayed as an emblem of royal power (Olbrycht, 1997, p. 32; 2012). This type of dagger was introduced in Iran as part of nomadic traditions of Central Asia and the Indo-Scythians, particularly vivid under the Sinatruclids (Olbrycht, 2015, pp. 358-69).

Plutarch's remark that Orodes II was "well acquainted both with the Greek language and literature" (*Vit. Crass.* 33.2) indicates a Greek impact on the Parthians (Wiesehöfer). Orodes' ally, Artavasdes II (q.v.), king of Armenia, wrote Greek tragedies. Surenas, described by Plutarch as a true Parthian with "Scythian" (viz. nomadic) manners and looks, was familiar with Greek literature too (Plutarch, *Vit. Crass.* 32). As the examples of Orodes II and Surenas demonstrate, the Parthians were open to the influence of other traditions, especially Greek culture. But there were limits beyond which they would not go in adopting foreign heritage. Limits were imposed by the Parthian ethos, and anyone who forsook the practice of the main Parthian customs risked social and political exclusion (Olbrycht, 2017, p. 8).

Crassus' invasion of Mesopotamia and the Parthian response at Carrhae . Not long after Orodes had murdered his brother Mithradates, he had to face a Roman invasion. The Roman commander and triumvir Marcus Licinius Crassus, famous vanquisher of Spartacus, decided to make a campaign against the Parthians for he "heard that they were exceedingly wealthy and expected that Orodes would be easy to capture, because he was but newly established" (Dio Cassius, 40.12.1). Crassus' invasion of Parthian Mesopotamia was an act of unjustifiable aggression, as the Romans themselves admitted (*Nulla belli causa: Cicero De finibus bonorum et malorum* 3.22. Crassus' war on Parthia in primary sources: Ampelius, 31; Appian, *B Civ.* 2.18; Caesar, *BCiv.* 3.31; Cicero, *Div.* 2.22; Dio Cassius, 40.12-27; L. Annaeus Florus, 1.46; Josephus, *BJ* 1.179-80, *AJ* 14.105 and 119; Justin, *Epit.* 42.4.4; Livy, *Epit.* 106; Plutarch, *Vit. Crass.* 16-33, *Cic.* 36, *Caes.* 28; Strabo, 16.1.23; Velleius Paterculus, 2.46.2).

In the spring of 54 BCE, Crassus came to Syria and his troops advanced into north Mesopotamia (on this campaign, see CARRHAE; Regling, 1899; 1907;

Debevoise, pp. 78-95; Garzetti; Brizzi; Bivar, 1983a, pp. 52-56; Nikonorov, 1995; Matyszak; Frenzo; Sampson; Weggen; Traina; Overtoom, 2017a). A small corps of Silaces, the Parthian governor of Mesopotamia, was defeated near Ichnai (Dio Cassius, 40.12) and he went to Orodes to report the Roman invasion. Crassus counted on support of King Abgar II of Edessa and Alchaudonius, an Arab prince. His main ally was Artavasdes of Armenia. Orodes sent two commanders to harass Roman troops in Mesopotamia. In some Greek cities there, the Roman garrisons were massacred (Zenodotium); in others, they were welcome by local inhabitants (Nicephorium) (Plutarch, *Vit. Crass.*17; Dio Cassius, 40.12.2-40.13.1-4; cf. Karras-Klapproth, pp. 159-61). Crassus left 7,000 infantry and 1,000 cavalry in northern Mesopotamian cities and withdrew to Syria for the winter of 54/53 BCE.

While the Romans were taking cities of Mesopotamia in 54 BCE, Orodes and his main force were presumably in action on diverse fronts in Parthia, destroying the centers of resistance put up by the adherents of Mithradates III. Other developments that kept the Parthians busy at this time were the momentous changes taking place in Bactria and Sakastān (Sistān). In the 50s BCE, there were struggles that led to the defeat of the Sakaraukai in western Bactria. Presumably the Sakaraukai, the allies of Sinatruces and Phraates III, supported Mithradates III as legitimate successor in Parthia but were defeated by Orodes II and his supporters (Olbrycht, 1998, p. 114).

A group of Parthian envoys came to Syria and provoked Crassus into disclosing his intention to take Seleucia in Babylonia (Dio Cassius, 40.16.1-3; Plutarch, *Vit. Crass.* 17-18). King Artavasdes advised him to march across Armenia, but Crassus did not follow this advice and turned down the offer of Artavasdes' assistance (Plutarch, *Vit. Crass.* 19). Armenia's combat potential was up to 46,000 soldiers (Plutarch, *Vit. Crass.* 19.1). Plutarch (*Vit. Crass.* 21.5) gives a detailed description of the Parthian preparations for the clash with the Romans: "Hyrodes [= Orodes] promptly divided his forces into two parts and was himself devastating Armenia to punish Artavasdes, while he dispatched Surenas to meet the Romans.... He was in great fear of the danger which threatened, and therefore held himself in reserve and watched closely the coming event, while he sent Surenas forward to make trial of the enemy in battle and to distract them." Orodes devised a brilliant combat strategy, boldly taking up the Roman challenge. The King of Kings must have had a considerable military force at his disposal.

In the spring of 53 BCE, Crassus' army of about 42,000 men entered



Mesopotamia (Plutarch, *Vit. Crass.* 20 gives 7 legions, 4,000 cavalry, and as many light-armed men; L. Annaeus Florus, 1.46.2, speaks of 11 legions; see Debevoise, p. 83). King Abgar of Edessa encouraged the Romans to continue their march, telling them that the Parthians were retreating and taking their gods with them. He was probably misleading Crassus (Dio Cassius, 40.20-21.1). The Roman army met the Parthian forces near the city of Carrhae. The course of the Battle of Carrhae and the way it was fought give very good insight into the Parthian art of war (chief sources: Ampelius, 31; Dio Cassius, 40.12-27; L. Annaeus Florus, 1.46; Plutarch, *Vit. Crass.* 16-33; Polyaeus, *Strat.* 7.41). The tactics the Parthians applied at Carrhae and in other major battles against the Romans (Dio Cassius, 40.22.2-3; Plutarch, *Vit. Ant.* 45) were based on the use of a combination of different types of horse units: heavy cavalry (cataphracts), spear-bearers (*kontophoroi*), and mounted archers (see Nikonorov, 1994; 1995; 1998; Olbrycht, 2010). Plutarch's depiction of Surenas and his army is striking for its numerous imaginative and explicit references to "Scythian" nomadic traditions (see Bernard).

Surenas was a young commander ready to undertake bravado operations. He used to travel on private business with a baggage train of 1,000 camels, and was followed by 200 wagons for his concubines. His army numbered 1,000 cataphracts (mail-clad horsemen), and "a still greater number of light-armed cavalry served as his escort; and he had altogether, as horsemen, vassals, and slaves, no fewer than 10,000 men" (Plutarch, *Vit. Crass.* 21.6). A noteworthy point is the excellent logistics of Surenas' army, which relied on the use of hundreds of camels to transport ammunition, viz. arrows (and probably spears as well, Plutarch, *Vit. Crass.* 21, 24). Representations of cataphracts appear on the coinage of Azes I (q.v.), an Indo-Scythian prince contemporary to Orodes II (Bopearachchi and Sachs). Another detail Azes had depicted on his coins was camels, which were indispensable for military logistics (cf. rectangular coin no. 81.10 in Senior, vol. II). Surenas' corps entailed forces armed in the same way as the Indo-Scythian cavalry.

As they commenced battle, the Parthians beat kettledrums to exert psychological pressure on the Romans (Plutarch *Vit. Crass.* 23.8-9; 26.4). Justin (41.2.8) states that the Parthians gave signals in battle not with the trumpet (as in Rome) but with the *tympanum* (see also Herodian 4.11.3). When the Parthians appeared within the Roman field of view, they suddenly discarded their camouflage (cf. Daryaee) and, with the roar of kettledrums, charged at the Roman line (Mielczarek). The Parthian archers poured a deadly hail of

arrows into the Romans from every side. The Romans tried to counter-attack, but the Parthians repeated their charges. The remnants of the defeated Roman army withdrew to the city of Carrhae: Crassus decided to flee to Sinnaca (Strabo, 16.1.23; see Biffi, p. 165) and agreed to talks (Plutarch, *Vit. Crass.* 30; Dio Cassius, 40.26). During a meeting of Parthian and Roman emissaries a skirmish ensued in which Crassus and his companions were slain. It cannot be ruled out that the Parthians did not mean to kill Crassus, but once the scuffle started they no longer had any scruples (Debevoise, p. 92). The remnants of Roman units panicked and fled. A total of 20,000 Romans had been killed and 10,000 were taken prisoner. They were settled in Margiana (Pliny the Elder, *NH* 6.47; Solinus, 48.3; Horace, *Carm.* 3.5.5). Some of them became soldiers in Parthian armies, and some betrayed their new Parthian masters (Velleius Paterculus, 2.82; L. Annaeus Florus, 2.20.4).

After the Battle of Carrhae, Surenas settled matters in Mesopotamia (Plutarch, *Vit. Crass.* 29.3-5). Thereafter, he conducted a triumphal march in Seleucia (Plutarch, *Vit. Crass.* 32). Meanwhile, Orodes II came to terms with Artavasdes II and a marriage between Orodes' son Pacorus and the sister of Artavasdes II was arranged. While the rulers were watching the performance of the *Bacchae* by Euripides, messengers arrived with the head and a hand of Crassus (Plutarch, *Vit. Crass.* 33.1-7; cf. Zadorojniy; Muccioli).

The Sūrēn clan in Parthian history. Plutarch was the first to leave a record of the great Sūrēn clan, using the name *Surenas*, derived from the appellative for the clan, for the man who was an ally of Orodes (Plutarch, *Vit. Crass.* 21). The Sūrēn clan had Parthian, or more precisely Dahaen roots (Herzfeld, p. 53; see DAHAE). The Parthian name for the Sūrēn clan (variant *swren*) occurs on an ostrakon from Šahr-e Qumes (No. 1), which may be dated on the basis of its archaeological context to the 1st century BCE (Livshits, p. 152). In *Crassus* 21.8, Plutarch writes that Surenas “enjoyed the ancient and hereditary privilege of being first to set the diadem upon the head of the Parthian king.” If the privilege was “ancient and hereditary” by 53 BCE, then its practice must have gone back for several generations. It may be highly probable that the rise to power of the Sūrēn was connected with the early history of Parthia (ca. 250-165 BCE). In early Islamic sources, the Sūrēn are associated with Sakastān (Sistān), in which country the Scythians played a key role (Ṭabari, I, p. 683, tr., IV, p. 77; cf. Herzfeld, pp. 70-85; Olbrycht, 1998, p. 117, n. 76). Perhaps in the reign of Mithradates II (122-87 BCE) the Sūrēn clan was entrusted with the restoration of peace and stability in eastern Parthia. They were successful, and



later, following the migration of the Scythians, they intermarried with them (Bivar, 2007, p. 28). In 58/57-53 BCE, following the accession of Orodes II, the Sūrēn and probably the Scythians of Sakastān as well, made the decisive contribution to the building up of the new order in Parthia.

Surenas was executed quite soon after he had defeated the Romans (Plutarch, *Vit. Crass.* 33.8). The reason for Surenas' execution, Plutarch says, was Orodes' jealousy. Most probably, the Arsacid king wanted to free himself from his mighty patron and ventured on a conflict with the powerful clan once he had reinforced his position in Parthia. It may be surmised that the Indo-Scythians were subject to a Scythian-Parthian dynasty called "the Vonones group" (on the coinage of this group, see Fröhlich, 2006; 2008, pp. 22-47), including Vonones, Spalahores, Azes (q.v.), and some other rulers. Vonones, who reigned in the 80s-70s BCE, used the title "Great King of Kings." This "Vonones group" must be closely linked to Sinatruces and his dynastic line in Parthia, including Phraates III and Orodes II. A turning point was the year 57 BCE, the inauguration of the Vikrama era, linked with the accession of King of Kings Azes I (Bivar, 1983b, pp. 196-97). In the same year, Orodes II reached for the Parthian throne. Presumably, Azes I's Indo-Scythian dynasty was an ally of Orodes II. After the fall of the Sūrēn, Orodes' other allies from the east, clans from Bactria, such as the Tochari and groups of Sakaraukai, might have stepped into their shoes. In 37 BCE, when Orodes II was killed by his son Phraates IV, there was a reshuffle in the balance of power in Parthia, and the Sūrēn regained their position of power as supporters of Phraates.

Parthian interventions in Roman Syria. The Parthian victory at Carrhae had tremendous political repercussions. Rome did not immediately start to think of revenge, but the idea did crop up in the plans entertained by Julius Caesar, and later by the Caesarians (Timpe; Sampson; Traina; Weggen; Schlude, 2012; Overtoom, 2017b). A year after their victory at Carrhae, the Parthians attacked Syria, but it was only a minor incursion (52 BCE; Dio Cassius, 40.28.1). Later, Pacorus I, son of Orodes II and Parthian *rex iunior*, was active in the west. Troops led by him and the high-ranking commander Osaces attacked the Roman provinces of Cilicia (q.v.) and Syria (51-50 BCE). Cicero (q.v.), who was governor of Cilicia at the time, was seriously afraid of Parthian attacks (Debevoise, 96-104; Weiskopf, 2002; Engels). In 50, the Parthians withdrew from the lands west of the Euphrates. It is doubtful that this was caused by the intrigues of the Roman governor of Syria, Marcus Calpurnius Bibulus, who had allegedly stirred up the satrap Ornodapates to rebellion

against Orodes (Justin, *Epit.* 42.4.5; Dio Cassius, 40.30.1-3; cf. Dobiáš, 1923). Eager to take advantage of his victory over Crassus, Orodes II tried to dominate Syria in 51-50 BCE, but the actions conducted by his son Pacorus were limited in resources and range. Apparently, the main Arsacid force was engaged in eastern Parthia; certainly, the Sūrēn clan and its allies sought to avenge the death of Surenas. At the same time, Orodes II had to devote some attention to Caucasia (Iberia, Albania).

In the 40s BCE, Rome was torn by civil war. Occasionally the Parthians took advantage of an opportune moment to pillage Syria and support one or other of the factions in Rome (Timpe; Dąbrowa). The Roman power-holder, Pompey, sent L. Hirrus to Orodes II (Dio Cassius, 41.55.3-4; Caesar, *BCiv.* 3.82.5; Justin, *Epit.* 42.4.6; cf. Ziegler, p. 34; Dąbrowa, p. 119). Orodes offered an alliance and requested Syria in return, however, the negotiations remained inconclusive. After his defeat, Pompey thought about a flight to Parthia but abandoned this idea and escaped to Egypt (Velleius Paterculus, 2.53.1; Appian, *BCiv.* 2.83; Dio Cassius, 42.2.5-6; L. Annaeus Florus, 2.13.5; Plutarch, *Vit. Pomp.* 74.6 with Debevoise, p. 105; Hillman). In 45 BCE, Pacorus' led an intervention in Syria, when he came to the rescue of Caesar's opponent, the governor of Syria Q. Caecilius Bassus (Cicero, *Att.* 14.9; Dio Cassius, 47.27.5; Appian, *B Civ.* 4.58-59; Strabo, 16.2.10; cf. Timpe, p. 116; Dąbrowa, p. 120). Caesar, the dictator of Rome, was planning a big expedition against the Parthians for 44 BCE, with an army of sixteen legions. His sudden death ended these arrangements (Debevoise, pp. 106-7; Timpe, pp. 114-15; Ziegler, pp. 34-35; McDermott; Malitz). Orodes supported the Roman leaders Cassius and Brutus, sending them military units. A Parthian unit fought on the Republican side at the Battle of Philippi in 42 BCE (Appian, *B Civ.* 4.59, 63, 88, 133; Dio Cassius, 47.30.3, 48.24.5; Justin, *Epit.* 42.4.7; Debevoise, p. 107; Timpe, p. 116). Shortly before the battle, Cassius sent Quintus Labienus to Orodes II to ask for more aid (Velleius Paterculus. 2.78.1; Appian, *B Civ.* 4.63; Dio Cassius, 48.24.4-5; Justin, *Epit.* 42.4.7; L. Annaeus Florus, 4.9.4).

The facts mentioned above testify to the active participation of the Parthians in political struggles in the Roman Republic in 52-42 BCE. The victory over Crassus at Carrhae strengthened the activities of Orodes II in Asia Minor and Syria, regions in which the Parthians had long been interested (Wolski, 1976). Previously, Mithradates II the Great (r. 122-87) tried to subjugate eastern regions of Anatolia, Cilicia, and parts of Syria (Olbrycht, 2009). The alliance of Orodes II with powerful Artavasdes II of Armenia made up a solid basis for



active Arsacid politics toward Anatolia and Syria. Another alliance linked Orodes with Commagene (q.v.), and he married the princess Laodice, daughter of Antiochus I (q.v.) of Commagene (Dio Cassius, 49.23.4; Sullivan, pp. 194-95).

Pacorus I as king of Parthia. Pacorus I, son of Orodes II, was apparently appointed *rex iunior* under Orodes II in the 40s BCE, and issued some coins bearing his youthful portrait (Wroth, p. 97; Simonetta, 1978; 1988; Gaslain). In 53 BCE, he was betrothed to the sister of Artavasdes II, king of Armenia (Plutarch, *Vit. Crass.* 32; cf. Debevoise, pp. 92-93). Pacorus is called king in several testimonies (Livy, *Epit.* 128; Tacitus, *Hist.* 5.9; Justin, *Epit.* 42.4.10; Frontinus, *Str.* 1.1.6). It seems that Pacorus even used the title of King of Kings: It occurs on his S49 coins (Gaslain). The office of co-regent is not surprising at all when we consider the traditional policy of the Sinatruclids. All of them prior to Orodes II had availed themselves of this institution (Olbrycht, 1998, p. 112). Pacorus' powers and duties focused on western Parthia, for time and again in the records he is mentioned as the commander-in-chief of the Parthian forces west of the Euphrates.

Pacorus I's coins (S49) depict him as a young ruler with a shaven chin and short hair, being crowned by Nike (Gaslain, pp. 12-13, Fig. 4). Some numismatists claim that the rare S44 tetradrachms bearing the title *Ktistou* ("Of the Founder") were issued by Pacorus I, not by Orodes II or Mithradates III, as believed hitherto (Sellwood and Simonetta, pp. 288-92).

Pacorus' conquests in the Roman East. Rome's weakness encouraged Orodes II and his son and co-regent Pacorus I to embark on more vigorous action, even the conquest of the Roman provinces in Asia. The Roman envoy Quintus Labienus, son of one of Caesar's generals, while on a mission to Parthia as the representative of the Republicans, urged the Parthians to invade Rome. In 40 BCE, a large army under the command of Pacorus and Labienus attacked the Roman regions of Syria and Anatolia (Debevoise, pp. 108-20; Bivar, 1983a, pp. 57-58). The Roman governor of Syria, Lucius Decidius Saxa, was defeated in battle, put up a defense in Apamea, and was later killed in Cilicia while fleeing (Dio Cassius, 48.25; L. Annaeus Florus, 2.19.4; Velleius Paterculus. 2.78.1; Livy, *Per.* 127). In the service of Orodes II, Labienus commanded a separate force composed largely of Romans, and conquered part of Anatolia up to the Aegean (Hersh; Noé; Curran; Lerouge, 2010). They were given a welcome by Republicans in many of the towns (cf. Dio Cassius 48.25-26). Labienus struck coins with iconography evidently alluding to

Parthian religious beliefs: a riderless horse and the inscription “Imperator Parthicus.” The horse was no doubt intended to symbolize the god Mithra (q.v.), and was commonly associated with the Parthians, the best horsemen of the age (Metzler, 1978; 2002). Meanwhile, Pacorus (with commander Barzaphranes) led the main Parthian force and conquered Syria and Judea (Dio Cassius, 48.24.8). Parthian troops reached Jerusalem and Gaza. In Judea, the Parthians put the Hasmonean Antigonus (Mattathias) on the throne, arousing enthusiasm among the Jews. Malchus, king of the Nabataeans, also gave his support to the Parthians (Josephus, *BJ* 1.276).

In 39 BCE, Mark Antony (q.v.), who was responsible for the Roman East, sent an army commanded by Publius Ventidius Bassus to Asia (Seaver; Gundel; Strugnell). Ventidius managed to recover Anatolian cities and defeated Labienus’ forces in the Taurus (Dio Cassius, 48.39-40; Frontinus, *Str.* 2.5.36; cf. Gundel, p. 808). Labienus was caught in Cyprus and killed. Thereafter, a Parthian corps was beaten by the Romans in the battle of the Amanus pass, and the main Parthian forces retreated beyond the Euphrates (Dio Cassius, 48.41.1-5; Strabo, 16.2.8; Frontinus, *Str.* 2.37; Justin, *Epit.* 42.4.7; L. Annaeus Florus, 2.19.5f.; Orosius, 6.18.23; cf. Gundel, p. 808). In the spring of 38 BCE, the Parthians, under the command of Pacorus, again entered Syria with a fairly limited force about 20,000 strong, so it was outnumbered by the Romans. A battle was fought between the Parthians and the Romans at Gindaros (q.v.) in the region of Cyrrhestike in Syria. It ended in the defeat of the Parthians and the death of Pacorus (Dio Cassius, 49.19-21; Plutarch, *Vit. Ant.* 33.6; 34.1-2; Justin, *Epit.* 42.4.10; Livy, *Per.* 128; Velleius Paterculus, 2.78.1; Frontinus, *Str.* 2.5.36; Tacitus, *Germ.* 37.3, *Hist.* 5.9.1; L. Annaeus Florus, 2.19.6; Eutropius, 7.5.2; see Debevoise, pp. 117 f.; Gundel, pp. 810-11). The remaining Parthians were driven back to Commagene or across the Euphrates to Mesopotamia.

The death of the heir to the throne was a shock for Orodes. The Romans displayed Pacorus’ head in many of the towns in Syria, trying to get them to surrender (Dio Cassius, 49.20.4; L. Annaeus Florus, 2.19.7; Plutarch, *Vit. Ant.* 34; Strabo, 16.2.8; Eutropius, 7.5). The war still continued from Judea to Commagene. Ventidius laid siege to the city of Samosata in Commagene, demanding a huge ransom of 1,000 talents. Antony, who took over the command, withdrew from the siege on receiving just 300 talents in ransom money (Gundel, pp. 812-13). Meanwhile the pro-Parthian Antigonus held out in Jerusalem until 37 BCE, when he was taken prisoner by Herod and executed (Debevoise, pp. 119-20). Romans took their revenge for Carrhae in the victory



at Gindaros (Tacitus, *Germ.* 37; Horace, *Carm.* 3.6.9 ff.). Orodes' and Pacorus' plans failed; Pacorus enjoyed a considerable amount of support from the inhabitants of Syria, and, in Judea, the Parthians were given a very warm welcome, yet, on the whole, they miscalculated and overrated the situation.

The death of Pacorus had serious repercussions in Parthia. Orodes was obliged to appoint another son, Phraates IV, heir to the throne. There are numismatic and prosopography data indicating that Phraates was a son by an Indo-Scythian princess (see PHRAATES IV), which enforced a change in Orodes II's policies. The turning-point came when Phraates murdered his father and took power (37 BCE). Subsequently, Parthia was plunged into a bitter civil war (Justin, *Epit.* 42.4.11-16, 5.1; Dio Cassius, 49.23; Plutarch, *Vit. Crass.* 33; *Ant.* 37).

Conclusion. After the profound changes that occurred in eastern Parthia in 58-55 BCE in connection with the civil war and the fall of the Sakaraukan supremacy in Bactria, Orodes seems to have been able to retain his dominance in Sakastān and the Indo-Scythian region. He was put on the throne of Parthia by the Sūrēn clan and the Sakas of the east. Following the execution of Surenas, Orodes fell out with the Sūrēn, but his eastern connections were still strong. Azes' dynasty of the Indo-Scythian region was closely connected with the Parthians. Its rule began in 58/7 BCE, approximately at the same time as that of Orodes II. In the northwest, Orodes II built up a firm block of dependent kingdoms including Armenia and Commagene. Armenia's links with the Arsacids would not have been possible if Atropatene (see Azarbaijan iii.) had not been another of Parthia's vassal states. Iberia and Albania appear to have been included into the circle of Arsacid dependent states. The end of Orodes II's reign was tragic for him. But despite the civil war and Phraates IV's *coup d'état*, Parthia was still a powerful state, as would be seen in its great war against Rome in 36 BCE. Orodes II led his empire to a zenith of power and the dramatic change on the throne linked with his death did not undermine the strength of Parthia.

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