

ANDRAGORAS

PARTHIAN GOVERNOR OR NOBLE CYPRIOT?

Numismatic scholars disagree on the identity of the ruler who struck gold stater in ancient Bactria.

THE ONLY INSCRIPTION on an extraordinary gold *stater* is “Andragoras.” The name was unknown in numismatics and almost unknown in history until a few of the ruler’s coins were uncovered in 1877 near Takht-i-Sangin (Figure 2) as part of the “Oxus Treasure,” a horde of artifacts from ancient Bactria found near the Oxus River (known today as Amu Darya). Located in central Asia, Bactria is bordered by present-day Afghanistan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. It was at times a satrapy of the Persian Empire, part of Alexander the Great’s empire, part of the Seleucid empire and a separate kingdom. In an 1879 article in *The Numismatic Chronicle*, “New Coins from Bactria,” Percy Gardner wrote that he was informed of a find in “Bokhara” by “Mr. Alexander Grant, Director of Indian State Railways.” The cache was located “eight marches beyond the Oxus at an old fort, on the tongue of land formed by two joining rivers.” Gardner described the Andragoras stater as an “interesting coin” but not unique, as

a man named General Cunningham also had one.

An engineer, archaeologist and numismatist, Major General Sir Alexander Cunningham acquired most of the objects in the first find of the Oxus Treasure. In 1881 he published an article in the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* that contained thorough descriptions of his acquisitions and, according to him, a “large number” of the coins “came” to him and Grant.

Cunningham’s numismatic acquisitions included a silver Andragoras *tetradrachm* similar to Figure 3, as well as his stater. Both Grant’s and Cunningham’s staters are now housed in the British Museum, and a third is in the Berlin Staatliche Museen Münzkabinett. Around 1994, three more Andragoras staters were found as part of the second Mir Zakah deposit, a coin hoard discovered in eastern Afghanistan. Figure 1 is one of these three. The obverse depicts a male head wearing a *taenia* (“headband”). The figure has alternately been described as Zeus, Poseidon, Dionysus or Andragoras, with a monogram to the bust’s left. The



FIGURE 1: *Bactria, Andragoras AV stater.*
Actual Size: 17.1mm

PHOTOS: JOHN NEBEL

When I attempted to research the sources and articles about Andragoras and his coinage, every line of investigation ended in a contradiction.



FIGURE 3: Bactria, Andragoras AR tetradrachm. Actual Size: 25.4mm

reverse depicts a quadriga drawn by horned horses with Nike as the charioteer. The warrior behind her has been described as Ares or Andragoras. The stater's mint is thought to have been in various locations in Bactria and Parthia.

Who was Andragoras, and when did he live? Since he had his own coinage, including gold specimens, "he must have considered himself an entirely independent prince, for the minting of gold money was the sign, in ancient times, of a claim to complete freedom," according to Gardner. The ancient historian Justin shines some light on whom Andragoras might have been. He wrote that "Alexander then conquered the Parthians, and a Persian nobleman, Andragoras, was appointed their governor; it was from him that the Parthian kings of later times were descended." In a later section, Justin mentions Andragoras again: "At that time there lived Arsaces, a man of obscure origins but proven courage. He had been making a living by robbery and banditry, and when he heard the news of Seleucus's defeat by the Gauls in Asia, Arsaces, freed from fear of the king [by internal Seleucid strife], entered Parthia with a band of robbers. Here he defeated the Parthian Governor, Andragoras, put him to death and assumed command of the people."

Based on Justin's account, sometime after the Persians were defeated in the Battle of Gaugamela in 331 B.C., Alexander

would have appointed a Parthian satrap. If this were a 20-year-old Andragoras, he would have been an improbable 100-plus years old in 238 B.C., the date of Andragoras's murder; therefore, Justin's two sections must refer to different men of the same name.

Recently, many scholars have stated that the latter passage in Justin refers to the Andragoras of the stater. This identification thereby adds to the coin's place in history as being part of the story of an invasion, murder, creation of the Parthian state and the pivotal event leading to the eventual dissolution of the Seleucid empire.

When I attempted to research the sources and articles about Andragoras and his coinage, every line of investigation ended in a contradiction. The following research details the conflicting thoughts of numismatic scholars. Finally, I conclude with a story about the Andragoras stater that ultimately appears to fit numismatics, history and archaeology better than the commonly accepted account.

The Accepted Story

In Otto Mørkholm's posthumous 1991 *Early Hellenistic Coinage*, he writes that

A Seleucid governor of Parthia named Andragoras was defeated around 240 according to Justin. Gold staters and silver tetradrachms inscribed ANΔΡΑΓΟΡΟΥ without any title have been at-

FIGURE 2: This 1898 map shows the location of Takht-i-Sangin, a town on the Oxus River where Andragoras's coins were discovered in 1877.



PHOTOS: HENRY KIEPERT ATLAS ANTIQVVS (MAP), JOHN NEBEL (COIN) & GETTY IMAGES/MAYUR BUDASANA

“This reconstruction of events, however, is based on the assumption that the coins of Andragoras are genuine, and here I must confess to serious doubts.”

tributed to this Andragoras, implying that shortly before the Parthian attack he had made himself independent of his Seleucid overlord.

This reconstruction of events, however, is based on the assumption that the coins of Andragoras are genuine, and here I must confess to serious doubts, an attitude shared by a number of earlier scholars. The types, bearded head of deity/Nike and armed warrior in quadriga for the gold, turreted head of Tyche/standing Athena holding owl for the silver, are odd for the time and place. Many details are clumsy in execution: the hair and beard of the deity, the legs of the horses, Tyche’s hair and the way the lance of Athena is left floating in the air. ...The coins all derive from the Oxus treasure (IGCH [Inventory of Greek Coin Hoards] 1822), but this find passed through Rawalpindi where numerous forgeries are known to have been added.

In his massive 1997 *Seleucid Prosopography and Gazetteer*, John Grainger’s Andragoras entry reads as follows:

Andragoras, governor (strategos) of Parthia who, from coin evidence, made himself independent of the Seleucid state, c. 246, and that maintained condition until attacked and killed by Arsakes I of the Parthians (a), thus permitting the Parthians to enter the Seleucid kingdom in the area which provided that disparate set of tribes with a name, and a king and dynasty; he was possibly the son or grandson of another Andragoras who was governor of Parthia for Alexander (b), he issued coins in his own name... (c) It has to be said, however, that these coins are regarded by some experts as fakes. Yet an Andragoras who is in a position which appears to be a governor is recorded from Iran (d). On the whole it seems likely that he existed, did govern, and did rebel.

In his 1999 *The Impact of Seleucid Decline on the Eastern Iranian Plateau*, Jeffrey Lerner describes Andragoras’s demise:

In this regard, Justin’s account (xli 4.7) of the Parni conquest of Parthia is crucial. Elsewhere, he (xli 4.4) explains that this act went unpunished by the Seleucids. ‘Since discord was go-



FIGURE 4: Bactria, Andragoras
AV stater. Actual Size: 19mm

ing on at this time between the brother-kings, Seleucus and Antiochus, who fighting for power missed the opportunity to punish the Parthians for having seceded from them.’ Consequently, we may place Andragoras’ reign from c. 245 B.C.E to c. 239/8 B.C.E... Among the coins that we possess of Andragoras are a series bearing his name in the Greek legend as ANΔΡΑΓΟΡΟΥ. There are also two gold staters of the ‘Quadriga-type’ with an Aramaic legend on the obverse [Figure 4]; Diakonoff and Zeimal have concluded that it reads NRGWR—an abbreviation of *NRGWR—which they take as a transliteration of the name Andragoras.

Less speculatively, Lerner writes that “the reverse legend can be read as WHŠW, the Iranian water deity Vaxšu/Vaxšuar.” He thinks that Andragoras possibly first issued coins in Greek but soon struck them only in Aramaic “in which his name was transliterated so as to associate him with this Iranian deity.”

Lloyd W.H. Taylor’s 2019 exceptionally thorough die study, “Birds of a Feather, Brothers in Arms,” published in *The American Journal of Numismatics* examines more than 300 coins produced by Andragoras and Sophytes. Taylor wrote that “Series 6 [coins with an ANΔΡΑΓΟΡΟΥ inscription, e.g. Figure 3] provides the absolute chronological peg for the entire emission for it is documented that Andragoras was the satrap of Parthia, initially appointed during the reign of Antiochus II, who led the province into secession during the reign of Seleucus II, only to be defeated and killed by the

PHOTOS: BRITISH MUSEUM (COIN) & GETTY IMAGES/MAYUR BUDASANA

Hill had immense experience examining coins, and the Andragoras staters didn't fit his preconceptions for either Greek or Indian coins.

nomadic Parni led by Arsaces.”

In 2020 Vesta Sarkhosh Curtis and Alexandra Magub's *Rivalling Rome: Parthian Coins & Culture* opens with an Andragoras stater, which they believed was the last non-Parthian coin minted in the area.

The rise of the Arsacid House dates to around 247 BC, when Arsaces was elected as the leader of an Iranian tribe known as the Parni, who were based in the territories south-east of the Caspian Sea in what is now Turkmenistan. About a decade later, Arsaces seized the region of Parthava (Parthia) in north-eastern Iran. At that time, Parthia was governed by a local ruler by the name of Andragoras, who in the preceding years had revolted against his Seleucid overlord Antiochus II (261-246 BC).

Genuine or Fake?

Published in 1922, *The Catalogue of the Greek coins of Arabia Mesopotamia and Persia* lists the British Museum's two Andragoras specimens. In a footnote, George Hill wrote apologetically about an earlier article he had penned for an Italian journal in which he doubted the authenticity of the Cunningham stater. He asserted, "I have since been persuaded that my doubts were not justified." Similar to Mørkholm, Hill had immense experience examining coins, and the Andragoras staters didn't fit his preconceptions for either Greek or Indian coins; nevertheless, they were ultimately acceptable to him when considered as hybrids.

In a 1943 *Numismatic Chronicle* article, "The Eastern Satrap Sophytes," R.B. Whitehead, former "Examiner of Treasure Trove for the Punjab Government," acerbically defended Cunningham and his coins against doubts:

In 1905 Sir Henry Howorth attacked the authenticity of coins from the Oxus treasure. I find his opening remarks [*Numismatic Chronicle*, "Some Notes on Coins Attributed to Parthia"] a great exaggeration. Those who are familiar with the magnificent Cunningham cabinet will agree that there is no justification for the allegation that the dealers grossly deceived General Cunningham. Sir Henry holds that the dealer Chandra Mall of Rawalpindi created the gold and silver coins of Andragoras; to those with local knowledge, the idea that this semi-literate person with elementary knowledge of English and none whatever

of classical literature possessed the scholarship and skill, even the desire, to investigate the writings of General Cunningham, to select the name Andragoras, and to invent suitable coins for him is ridiculous.

In *The Seleucids. The Decline and Fall of Their Empire*, Józef Wolski addresses Mørkholm by name:

The doubts expressed by O. Mørkholm, *Early Hellenistic Coinage* pp. 119 ff., seem less than justified, since the person of Andragoras and his role in history were unappreciated among scholars until the publication of the present author's article, "Le problème d'Andragoras," pp. 113ff.; thus the Ravalpindi goldsmiths cannot have been interested in him or produced counterfeit coins.

As mentioned earlier, Andragoras staters have been found at different times and places: 1877 in the Oxus Treasure and 1994 in Mir Zakah. The sites are about 500 miles apart, as the crow flies. Since the latter was discovered after Mørkholm's death, he didn't have the benefit of the knowledge that disproved his theory that the British Museum's Andragoras staters were counterfeits.

Documented in Classical Numismatic Guild's *Triton XIV* catalog as Lot 550, the Grant and Cunningham staters in the British Museum were compared with two of the Mir Zakah staters. An examination determined that all four were struck with the same obverse die, and all except the Grant stater also share the same reverse die. The Cunningham stater's features do appear to be spread slightly, indicating physical distortion of that coin; nevertheless, it was produced with the same obverse die as the others.

The Importance of Justin

Gardner points out that only Justin mentions the name Andragoras. As a result, one brief section of the ancient historian's works is a critical part of many authors' conclusions. Justin's writings, penned around A.D. 250, are derivative—an epitome of Pompeus Trogus who had authored a 44-book history approximately 200 years prior. All of Trogus's history, however, has been lost. In the introduction to John Yardley's translation of Justin, author Bob Devlin says,

He "plucked out" ("excerpted") those items in Trogus which he found most worth knowing,

Wolski thinks a solution to the **Andragoras dilemma** is to consider that both **Andragoras passages** in Justin could refer to the same person.

omitting things which neither gave pleasure in the knowing nor were necessary as illustrations of behavior, and made sort of an anthology—literally “a little body of flowers”—to aid the memory of those who had studied Greek history and to instruct those who had not.

Wolski thinks a solution to the Andragoras dilemma is to consider that both Andragoras passages in Justin could refer to the same person. He cites the inscription documented in *Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum* (SEG) 20.325 (translated to English by Graham Shipley):

Euandros to Andragoras and Apollodotus, greetings. We have set free Hermaios on behalf of king Antiochos and queen Stratonike and their offspring, so that he may be sacred to Sarapis and we have set up in the sanctuary a notice of his release and that of his family. [...]th day of Gorpiaios [August]. Farewell.

Since Antiochus I Soter’s reign was 281-261 B.C., Wolski concluded, “Thus while a long term of office may not have been the rule for satraps, it was a sufficiently frequent phenomenon to allow for the possibility that the two Andragoras, i.e. the one from the inscription and the dynast of Parthia, were one and the same person.”

In *The Cambridge History of Iran* published in 1983, A.D.H. Bivar draws the opposite conclusion from Wolski:

The historicity of Andragoras is confirmed by the discovery of his gold and silver coins in the Oxus Treasure and more recently by a Greek inscription published by Robert [SEG 20.325]. The latter, indeed, refers to Andragoras as a satrap already under Antiochus I, and suggests that he may have held his office for nearly twenty years before he was overcome by the Parthians. This circumstance makes it less likely that the satrap’s rule could have been prolonged to so late a date as 238 B.C.

In the 2018 *The Coming of the Parthians: Crisis and Resilience in the Reign of Seleukos II*, Rolf Strootman points out that

We do have an additional source for the contents of Trogu’s work that is independent of Justin:

the so-called “Prologues,” a detailed list of the contents of the respective books of Trogu’s lost universal history, collated about 300 A.D. The Prologues show that in Trogu’s original work the Parthians are absent too until the mid-2nd century B.C. The sudden “breakaway” of the Parthians during the reign of Seleukos II is most likely a construction of Justin himself... It was only about 100 B.C. when the Parthian monarchy introduced its own imperial time reckoning on royal coinage; the Parthian Era, which retrospectively dated the foundation of the empire to the reign of Arsakes I; before this, the Seleukid Era continued to be used. It is not hard to see this backdating as a form of invention of tradition.

As late as the reign of the Parthian King Mithradates I (171-138 B.C.), a tetradrachm (Sellwood type 13) bears the inscription ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ ΜΕΓΑΛΟΥ ΑΡΣΑΚΟΥ ΦΙΛΕΛΛΗΝΟΣ (“Great King Arsaces Lover of Greeks”). Since the Arsacids were proclaiming themselves lovers of the Greeks in the 2nd century, doubt is cast on the idea that they were their mortal enemies before.

Introducing Sophytes

In 1866 Cunningham described a “coin of the Indian prince Sophytes,” who he identified as a contemporary of Alexander the Great. Cunningham thought Sophytes was the Indian Sopeithes mentioned by Curtius and Diodorus. The ancient Greek historian Diodorus Siculus wrote:

Their king Sopeithes was strikingly handsome and tall beyond the rest, being over four cubits [6’] in height. He came out of his capital city and gave over himself and his kingdom to Alexander, but received it back through the kindness of the conqueror.

Based on the history of Alexander’s campaign, Cunningham dated the Sophytes coin between 316 and 306 B.C., the likely time when Alexander received Sopeithes’s fealty. Since the mid-20th century, scholars have agreed that the coinages of Sophytes and Andragoras are related; therefore, if either coinage can be approximately dated, then the other can too. This dating can confirm or prove fatal to the accepted Andragoras story.

Whitehead’s article written 75 years after Cunningham’s was the first time that Sophytes’s identity as King Sopeithes was challenged:

Whitehead identified Sophytes as a Persian who continued to rule independently after the fall of the Persian Empire.



FIGURE 5: Athens AR tetradrachm
c. 430 B.C. Actual Size: 23.9mm

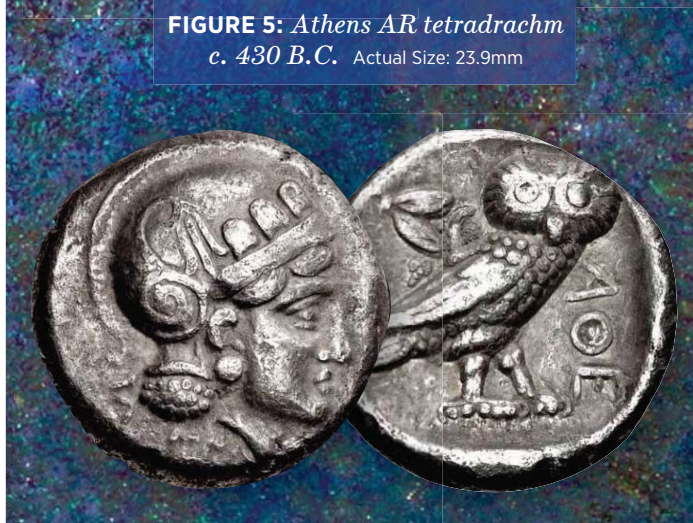


FIGURE 6: Bactria, Stasanor
AR tetradrachm. Actual Size: 24.5mm



FIGURE 7: Bactria, Sophytes
AR didrachm. Actual Size: 20mm

Nevertheless it is unparalleled that a Hindu raja in India should strike a piece signed by a Greek artist, Greek in style and fabric, bearing a Hellenized form of his name. The drachm is not a direct imitation of any existing piece; the designs are original, and the face is a portrait not in the least Indian in appearance.

Whitehead identified Sophytes as a Persian who continued to rule independently after the fall of the Persian Empire. Whitehead groups the Sophytes coin with Athenian owls and similar silver coins (Figures 5-7) and dates them to “probably earlier than 320 B.C.” He associates them with Andragoras’s coinage and places the mint of both near the Oxus River in northern Bactria.

In 1996 in *Nomismatica Khronika*, Osmund Bopearachchi’s “Sophytes, the Enigmatic Ruler of Central Asia” presents a study of 14 Sophytes coins, dividing them into three groups: imitations of Athenian owls (Figures 6-7), pieces with an eagle replacing the owl on the reverse (Figure 8), and examples with the inscription ΣΩΦΥΤΟΥ (Figure 9).

Bopearachchi observed that the Sophytes coin that Cunningham acquired was quite similar to the Seleucus I trophy tetradrachm (Figure 10). “Though the obverse type of Seleucus I in question has few variations (especially the panther skin and the bull’s horn and ear on the helmet) compared to that of Sophytes, one cannot miss the fact that one is copied from the other.” Since Bopearachchi thinks Sophytes and Sopeithes are not the same person, he is able to date the Sophytes coinage after Seleucus I trophy coinage. He places it in the late 4th century B.C., later than Cunningham had.

Die Studies

Five recent die studies of Sophytes coins have been published, and I have briefly addressed Taylor’s. Of the remaining four, only one, by Jalal Dilmaghani, accepts that the Andragoras stater is related to the apocryphal story of Andragoras’s murder. (Brian Kritt’s; Oliver Bordeaux and Osmund Bopearachchi’s; and Susma Jansari’s studies do not.)

In *The Seleucid Mint of Ai Khanoum*, published in 2016, Kritt presents a chronology for Bopearachchi’s three groups of Sophytes coin types, dating them as:

- 1) Imitations of Athenian owls 295/3-285/3 B.C., Figures 6-7

In interpreting the iconography of Sophytes's coins from both Indian and Greek perspectives, Jansari reasons that it **could appeal** to both cultures.

2) Coins with an eagle replacing the owl on the reverse 285/3-280/278 B.C., Figure 8

3) Coins with the inscription ΣΩΦΥΤΟΥ 289/78-270 B.C., Figure 9

Kritt also maintains that the Sophytes coinage is derived from the Seleucus I trophy coinage. He notes that “besides the obvious differences in the helmet between the trophy coin obverse and that of the Sophytes coins, there is a striking similarity in the impression projected by these two images which clearly indicates that the Sophytes obverse portrait was copied from that of the trophy coins.”

Susma Jansari, British Museum Asia faculty member, published “The Sophytes Coins: from the Punjab to Bactria and Back Again” in the 2018 *Numismatic Chronicle Offprint 178*. Her article presents a detailed die study of 82 Sophytes coins in various denominations. Contrary to Whitehead and Boppearachchi, Jansari accepts Cunningham’s analysis that Sophytes was the ruler in the Punjab whom Alexander had befriended. Then, in interpreting the iconography of Sophytes’s coins from both Indian and Greek perspectives, she reasons that it could appeal to both cultures.

Jansari believes that to the Indian, the helmeted head obverse (Figure 9) would represent Skanda (aka Kārttikeya), “traditionally presented as the general of the army of the gods.” The reverse cock is a symbol often associated with Kārttikeya as in the statue (Figure 11). “If this is an accurate interpretation, then the Sophytes coins are not only the first Greek coins to be minted with the name (written in Greek script) of an Indian ruler, but also the first Greek coins to display the image of a local deity of this part of the subcontinent.”

To the Greek, the coin’s obverse would be recognizable as Hermes, the messenger god with his herald’s *kerykleion* (“caduceus”) on the reverse. Jansari dates the Seleucus trophy coins and Sophytes coins with a ΣΩΦΥΤΟΥ inscription as “broadly contemporary.” The Sophytes coinage as a whole, starting with the Athenian imitations and running through the Skanda/Hermes types, she dates to 323-281 B.C. Significantly for dating the Andragoras coinage, Jansari illustrates an Andragoras Tyche coin and imitation Athenian owl, each with a reverse caduceus, and also describes them as broadly contemporary.

Bordeaux and Boppearachchi presented a talk “Sophytos and Andragoras: Pioneering



FIGURE 8: *Bactria, Sophytes*
AR didrachm. Actual Size: 13mm



FIGURE 9: *Bactria, Sophytes*
AR tetradrachm. Actual Size: 28.8mm



FIGURE 10: *Susa, Seleucus I*
tetradrachm, late 4th-early 3rd B.C.
Actual Size: 27.7mm

PHOTOS: CLASSICAL NUMISMATIC GROUP (NGCOINS.COM, FIGURE 8), JOHN NEBEL (FIGURES 9-10), & GETTY IMAGES/MAYUR BUDASANA

Speculatively, at least some of Andragoras's and Sophytes's coins were struck at the same mint.



FIGURE 11: Gandhara, statue of Skanda/Kārttikeya, A.D. 2nd century.

Coin-Strikers in Bactria?” at a 2018 conference in Prague. (A copy of their handout is available at academia.edu.) They examined over 300 coins of Andragoras and Sophytes.

Unlike Boppearachchi’s approach in his 1996 article, the first group of Sophytes coins are divided into incuse (Figure 6) and non-incuse (Figure 7) varieties. A significant element links the Sophytes and Andragoras coins: the two Sophytes monograms closely match that of the An-

dragoras stater’s. Speculatively, at least some of Andragoras’s and Sophytes’s coins were struck at the same mint. Also telling in Bordeaux’s and Boppearachchi’s handout is a photo of an uncleaned group of coins from a 2014 hoard. Buried together were Andragoras Tyche head tetradrachms (Figure 3), Sophytes coins with the feather design on the cheek piece (Figure 9) and Athenian owl imitations (Figures 6-7).

In his 2019 English translation “On Andragoras and Sophytes, A Numismatic Analysis,” Jalal Dilmaghani, an Iranian, shares his experience and expertise:

I have been collecting and studying Iranian coins for the last forty years, and particularly the Parthian ones, and I have also been informed about most of the coins and hoards which have been surfaced in the north and north-east corner of Iran which is the site of the ancient Parthia, but to the best of my knowledge not even a single specimen of Andragoras has ever been found in this area; therefore, I strongly believe that the coins with the name Andragoras were never minted in Ecbatana, Hekatompylos or even Parthia.

According to Dilmaghani’s numismatic and historical view, two intertwined sets of events took place between 326 B.C. and 253 B.C. First, the Sophytes coinage was instituted in Punjab, India, around 326 B.C. when Sophytes (Sopeithes) was permitted by Alexander to strike coins in his own name. Sophytes produced a silver coin (Figure 12) with an obverse similar to Alexander’s gold staters (Figure 13) but with an eagle reverse rather than Nike. In 294 B.C. Antiochus I expanded the territory ruled by Sophytes’s son and successor, also named Sophytes, to include Bactria, and minted coins with his own name and portrait (Figure 9); Sophytes chose the city of Bactra, the commercial hub of Bactria, for his mint.

In parallel, in 321 B.C., soon after Alexander’s death in 323 B.C., Stasanor, a Cypriot and the satrap of Bactria, initiated the mintage of coinage in Alexandria on the Oxus River. These issues could be easily accepted in trade but would not draw attention to himself. His coinage was similar to



THE MONOGRAMS on Sophytes coins (left, middle) closely match the symbol on the Andragoras stater.

When Antiochus I died in 281 B.C., Andragoras took it upon himself to mint coins in his own name.

the well-known coinage of Athens that was already in circulation throughout the ancient world. Figure 6 is a tetradrachm of Stasanor—the letters ΣΤΑ (“STA”) behind Athena’s head are barely legible in this example. Stasanor’s coinage continued until around 307-305 B.C., when Seleucus I took control of Bactria. Under Seleucus, the imitation Athenian coinage continued but without the reverse incuse (Figure 7). In 281 B.C., after Seleucus’s death, Antiochus I appointed Andragoras governor, who continued with Athenian imitations. When Antiochus I died in 281 B.C., Andragoras took it upon himself to mint coins in his own name (Figures 1 and 3). Finally, in 253 B.C. after a war with Egypt, Antiochus II appointed Diodotus I as the satrap of Parthia, and both Andragoras’s and Sophytes’s coinage ceased. Eventually, in 238 B.C., according to Dilmaghani’s chronology, Andragoras was killed by Arsaces, and Parthia was lost to the Seleucids.

Alternative Explanation

Presenting a paper in 2017, “Stasanor and Andragoras: Two Cypriot Princes at the Hellenistic Far East,” Archil Balakhvantsev drew the conclusion that Andragoras’s coins were minted in Bactria in the last quarter of the 4th century B.C. Accepting that, Andragoras’s coinage was that of an independent pre-Seleucid.

Balakhvantsev provides the following numismatic evidence: Andragoras coins have only been found in Bactria, the Oxus Treasure and Mir Zakah II. A 1965 hoard found in Bujnurd (Parthia, Atrek valley) included 1,600 silver coins, mostly Arsaces II and Alexander III *drachms*, but no Andragoras coins. This find contained pieces that were struck earlier and later than Andragoras’s, which indicates that Andragoras’s specimens probably did not circulate west of Bactria, making them effectively a local coinage. This was also indicated by their difference from Seleucid coins’ weight standard. Early Parthian examples (Figure 14) are vastly different from Andragoras issues in appearance. They are silver drachms, whereas Andragoras silver coins are tetradrachms; the die axes of Parthian coins are ↑↑, and Andragoras’s coins are ↑↓. According to Balakhvantsev, “All of these would seem to rule out that the Andragoras coinage could originate from the Parthylene [Parthia] of the second half of the 3rd century BC.”

In Jacqueline Karageorghis’s *Kypris The Aphrodite of Cyprus*, she describes an inscription on the



FIGURE 12: *Bactria, Sophytes*
AR diobol. Actual Size: 11mm



FIGURE 13: *Miletus, Alexander III*
AV stater, 325-323 B.C.
Actual Size: 18.7mm



FIGURE 14: *Parthia, Arsakes I*
AR drachm, mid-to-late 3rd century B.C.
Actual Size: 19.1mm

PHOTOS: CLASSICAL NUMISMATIC GROUP (CNGCOINS.COM, FIGURE 12), JOHN NEBEL (FIGURES 13-14) & GETTY IMAGES/MAYUR BUDASANA

Justin might have been accurate in writing that an Andragoras was murdered, but this man was not the noble Cypriot expatriate Andragoras.

base of a statue dedicated to Aphrodite by Androcles, the last king of Amathous.

The king Androkles [has dedicated] to the Cyprian Aphrodite [the images of his sons] Orestheus and Andragoras. The bronze statue has been lost, the sandstone base survives. Also tying Andragoras to Cyprus is the Lexicon of Greek Personal Names which lists only one Andragoras from Asia Minor, the Cypriot.

During the siege of Tyre in 332 B.C., the Greek historian Arrian wrote, “The quinqueremes of King Pnytagoras, Androcles of Amathus and Pasicrates of Curium were sunk and the rest driven ashore and broken up.” Ultimately, Tyre fell to Alexander’s forces. At that time, other Cypriots had entered Alexander’s sphere. Later in 321 B.C. after Alexander’s death, and during the partition of his empire at Triparadeisus by Antipater, Cypriots were assigned significant territories:

Of the upper satrapies Mesopotamia and Arbelitis were given to Amphimachus, Babylonia to Seleucus, Susianê to Antigenes because he had been foremost in making the attack on Perdicas, Persia to Peucestes, Carmania to Tlepolemus, media to Pithon, Parthia to Philip, Aria

and Drangenê to Stasander of Cyprus, Bactrianê and Sogdianê to Stasanor of Soli, who was from that same island.



FIGURE 15: Cyprus, Evagoras II AV twelfth stater, mid-4th century B.C.

Actual Size: 8.5mm

It would not be surprising that the young Prince Andragoras, seeking fame and fortune, followed his father into Alexander’s sphere, then later migrated to the territory controlled by one of his older countrymen, in this case Stasanor in Bactria, if not initially, then afterwards when Stasander lost his territory.

As further numismatic evidence of Andragoras’s heritage, Balakhvantsev wrote, “The influence of Cyprus can be seen in the obverse iconography of the Andragoras tetradrachms. The head of the goddess in corona mura-

lis [‘turreted crown’] has its closet analogies in the coinage of Cypriot cities of the second half of the 4th century B.C. [Figure 15].”

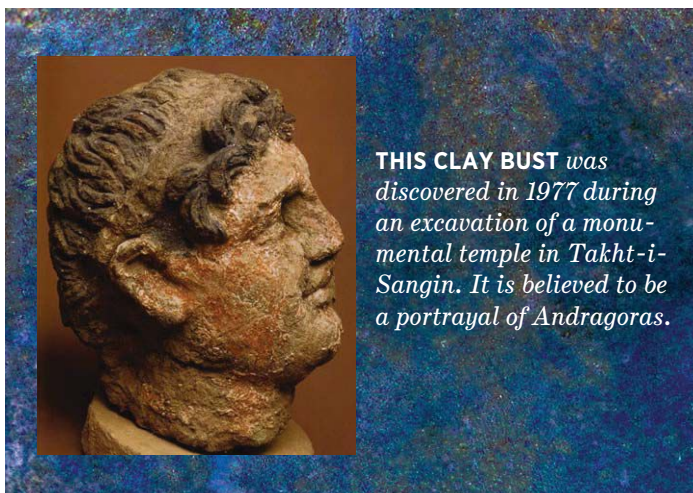
Then, archaeologically, he describes 1977 finds in an excavation of a monumental temple in Takht-i-Sangin, near where the first Andragoras staters were discovered 100 years earlier: unfired clay busts were uncovered. A colleague of Balakhvantsev’s, B.A. Litvinskiy, was the leader of the expedition and ultimately asked him for help in identification. Balakhvantsev’s opinion was that the younger of the two busts, shown here, was Andragoras; the older one, Stasanor.

Conclusion

Taken together, the Oxus Treasure, Mir Zakah II excavation, Takht-i-Sangin temple finds, Cypriot inscriptions, Diodorus, Arrian, and Sophytes’s and Andragoras’s linked coinage, I think associating their linked coinage with Justin’s tale is incorrect. Justin might have been accurate in writing that an Andragoras was murdered, but this man was *not* the noble Cypriot expatriate Andragoras who settled in Bactria and struck coins inscribed with his name. ■

SOURCES

A bibliography can be viewed at ancientmoney.org/andragoras.html.



THIS CLAY BUST was discovered in 1977 during an excavation of a monumental temple in Takht-i-Sangin. It is believed to be a portrayal of Andragoras.

PHOTOS: CLASSICAL NUMISMATIC GROUP (NGCOINS.COM, STATER) & PINTEREST/COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY