

THE KINGS OF PONTUS: SOME PROBLEMS OF IDENTITY AND DATE

Pontus emerges as an independent kingdom in the first half of the third century B.C. The origins of its royal family lay in a dynasty of Persian nobles that held sway in the city of Cius throughout the fourth century¹). The earliest member of the dynasty appears to have been the Mithridates who was succeeded by the famous satrap of Phrygia, Ariobarzanes. After an adventurous career, which included taking a leading part in the revolt against Artaxerxes Mnemon, Ariobarzanes was betrayed in 362 by his son Mithridates, and crucified²). Diodorus then follows the succession clearly through another Ariobarzanes (362–337³), Mithridates II of Cius (337–302⁴), and finally Mithridates III of Cius

1) Diodorus (20.111.4) couples another town with Cius, but the name is not clear. It should cause no surprise to find a Persian family like this in Anatolia: the extent of Persian colonization throughout Asia Minor, and the survival into imperial times of its influence, especially in religion and onomastics, have been made increasingly clear by the work of Robert – see, for instance, L. Robert, *Une nouvelle inscription grecque de Sardes: règlement de l'autorité perse relatif à un culte de Zeus*, CRAI 1975, 306–330 (esp. 328–330); *Monnaies grecque de l'époque impériale. I: Types monétaires à Hypaipa*, RN 18 (1976) 25–48 (esp. 37–38 n. 60). The Mithridatids of Cius are themselves evidence of this colonization, and may be compared to the fourth century B. C. Lycian dynasty of Arbinas, who also seems to have been of Persian stock: see J. Bousquet, *Arbinas, fils de Gergis, dynaste de Xanthos*, CRAI 1975, 138–148; L. Robert, *Les conquêtes du dynaste lycien, Arbinas*, JS Jan./Jun. 1978, 3–48.

2) Ariobarzanes is comparatively well documented: see Judeich, RE 2 (1895) col. 832 No. 1. It is not clear, as Judeich claims, that Ariobarzanes was a son of the Mithridates whom he succeeded.

3) Attempts to dispense with this second Ariobarzanes, and instead keep the satrap alive until 337 are not successful. Diodorus (16.90.2) reports the death of Ariobarzanes in 337/6 after a rule of twenty six years, and implies (15.90.3) that Mithridates I had died, and that the satrap had taken over the dynasty, before 362: see Olshausen, RE Suppl. 15 (1978) col. 401. Moreover, although Harpokration provides the only evidence of the satrap's crucifixion, there is other evidence that he was betrayed, and it is almost inconceivable that as one of the leaders of a major revolt against the king of Persia, he would have been allowed after his capture not only to live, but also to continue to rule in Cius: see Ernst Meyer, *Die Grenzen der hellenistischen Staaten in Kleinasien* (Leipzig 1925) 158; Geyer, RE 15 (1932) col. 2158 No. 5.

4) Olshausen (supra n. 3) col. 401 argues that this Mithridates could not be

(302–266)⁵). It is usually accepted that the transition from Cius to the kingdom of Pontus was made by this last mentioned Mithridates. In 302 his predecessor fell under suspicion of conspiring with Cassander against Antigonos, and was killed near Cius. Mithridates III of Cius then inherited the dynasty, but was warned by his friend Demetrius that he too was in danger from Antigonos, and fled to Paphlagonia. Here he ruled for thirty-six years (302–266), at some stage proclaiming himself king Mithridates I Cistes, founder of the kingdom of Pontus and of the line of Pontic kings (Diod. 20.111.4; Plut. Demetr. 4).

I

Some uncertainty, however, surrounds Mithridates III of Cius. First a relatively minor question of identity. Whose son was he? Plutarch (Demetr. 4.1) calls him the son of Ariobarzanes, Μιθριδάτης ὁ Ἀριοβαρζάνου παῖς, while Diodorus (20.111.4) calls him the son of Mithridates, Μιθριδάτης ὁ υἱὸς αὐτοῦ. Most now seem to favour Fischer's text of Diodorus which omits ὁ υἱὸς αὐτοῦ and thus leaves Mithridates III as the son of Ariobarzanes, a brother, it is assumed, of Mithridates II of Cius not otherwise attested⁶). Even if Plutarch is right, however, there is no need to invent an unattested Ariobarzanes: Mithridates III could be a son of the Ariobarzanes who controlled Cius from 362 to 337. He would have to have been born towards the end of Ariobarzanes' life, as Plutarch says that he was a contemporary of his friend and saviour Demetrius, who was born in 337/6 (Diod. 19.69.1). Fischer's solution does not seem to have any great advantage over Meyer's earlier attempt to emend Plutarch, and leave Diodorus' as the correct version, with Mithridates III the son of Mithridates II of Cius⁷). Fischer is able to identify Mithridates III as the Mithridates son of Ariobarzanes, who, according to Diodorus (19.40.2),

the treacherous son of the satrap Ariobarzanes, but the identification seems quite possible: he could, for instance, be a younger brother of his predecessor Ariobarzanes, and both could be sons of Ariobarzanes the satrap.

5) Diod. 16.90.2; 20.111.4. Th. Reinach, *Mithridates Eupator, König von Pontos* (Leipzig 1895) 5 n. 4, argues against this dynasty, but has to discount entirely the evidence of Diodorus. For a defense of the dynasty, see Geyer (*supra* n. 3) col. 2157.

6) See Olshausen (*supra* n. 3) col. 401.

7) See Ed. Meyer, *Geschichte des Königreichs Pontos* (Leipzig 1879) 36.

fought for Eumenes against Antigonus and Demetrius in 317/16. But this is an unconvincing identification, as Plutarch describes Mithridates III as a friend of Demetrius and courtier of Antigonus. If we accept Meyer, it could then be Mithridates II who fought for Eumenes against Antigonus, and perhaps as a result of the battle he was forced to become subject to Antigonus (ὑπήκοος ὦν Ἀντιγόνῳ – Diod. 20.111.4), and to send his son, the future Mithridates III as a pledge to Antigonus' court where he befriended Demetrius.

II

Identifying Mithridates III of Cius as Mithridates I Ctistes of Pontus leads to more serious problems concerning the number of Pontic kings and their identification. From Appian (Mithr. 9; 112) and Plutarch (Demetr. 4.4) we learn that Mithridates Eupator was the eighth king of Pontus and sixth Mithridates⁸). We have definite knowledge of Ariobarzanes, Pharnaces and five kings named Mithridates, so a sixth Mithridates is usually assumed, and inserted in the line between about 220 and 185 as Mithridates III, father and predecessor of Pharnaces I⁹). The inclusion of Mithridates III accounts for the five royal tombs at Amaseia, one of which was unfinished and was assumed by Rostovtzeff to be that of Pharnaces, who, he thought, moved the capital of the kingdom to Sinope¹⁰). Rather than invent another Mithridates, Rostovtzeff sug-

8) It is not easy to make sense of the evidence of Syncellus, who says that the kingdom of Pontus lasted for two hundred and eighteen years under the rule of ten kings (p. 523.5; p. 593.7 Dind.). For a detailed discussion of this evidence, see G. Perl, *Zur Chronologie der Königreiche Bithynia, Pontos und Bosphoros*, in: *Studien zur Geschichte und Philosophie des Altertums*, ed. J. Harmatta (Amsterdam 1968) 324–330. Perl maintains that the two hundred and eighteen years run from 281–63, but he cannot explain the ten kings. Jacoby, *FGrHist* 244 F 82 Comm. suggests that Syncellus' number I (10) should be read H (8), and he also changes the number of years: instead of ΣΙΗ (218) he reads ΣΜ (240). This enables him to have the kingdom of Pontus run from 302/1 to 63. It is a neat but speculative solution.

9) See, for instance, Meyer (supra n. 7) 53; D. Magie, *Roman Rule in Asia Minor*, vol. 2 (Princeton 1950) 1088 n. 39; E. J. Bickermann, *Chronology of the Ancient World* (London 1980) 134.

10) *CAH* vol. 9 p. 217–18. Actually, we do not know if all the kings of Pontus starting from Mithridates I Ctistes were buried there, and we do not know who moved the capital to Sinope. Strabo (12.3.11 C 545) tells us that Mithridates

gested that in fact Mithridates II of Cius was Mithridates I Ctistes of Pontus. He based this suggestion on an inscription from Tauric Chersonesus which records an agreement between Pharnaces I and the Chersonitans made in May of the 157th year of Pharnaces' era (IOSPE I² 402). According to the Pontic era later in use, which started in October 297¹¹), the 157th year would correspond to 141/140 – too late for Pharnaces. Rostovtzeff argued that the agreement would make most sense in about 180/179 just after Pharnaces' war with his neighbours¹²), the treaty at the end of which included Chersonesus as an *adscriptus*¹³). The era year 157 would then correspond to a starting date of 336/5, the year that Mithridates II of Cius inherited the dynasty: it must, therefore, have been he who was known as Mithridates I Ctistes of Pontus. This satisfies the number of kings in Plutarch and Appian, and provides occupants for the five tombs at Amaseia, without hypothesizing another Mithridates. Rostovtzeff might also have enlisted support for his theory from Hieronymus, cited by Lucian (Macrob. 13) as stating that the Mithridates king of Pontus known as Ctistes, died in Pontus at the age of eighty four, while fleeing from Antigonus – 'Ἀντίγονον τὸν μονόφθαλμον φεύγων ἐπὶ Πόντου ἐτελεύτησε'¹⁴). This might appear to correspond with Mithridates II of Cius who died in 302.

There are, however, major problems with these arguments. First, Plutarch (Demetr. 4.1) says that the founder of the kingdom of Pontus was a contemporary (καθ' ἡλικίαν συνήθης) of Demetrius, who was born in 337/6. According to Hieronymus, Mithridates Ctistes would have to have been born in 386. Moreover, Hieronymus' Mithridates II (Ctistes, as he appears to think) dies in Pontus; Diodorus says that Mithridates II died near Cius. In fact one small textual emendation provides an obvious solution to the

VI Eupator was born and brought up there, which might imply that it became the capital, at the latest, in the time of Mithridates V Euergetes. On the other hand, Strabo also says that as well as being born there, Eupator honoured Sinope especially and treated it as the metropolis of his kingdom – as if to say that previous kings had not treated it as their metropolis. Responsibility for the move cannot be attributed with safety.

11) This is demonstrated clearly by Perl (supra n. 8) 299–306.

12) In this he was following Loeper who first published the inscription from Chersonesus. See also Diehl, RE 19 (1938) col. 1850.

13) See Polyb. 25.2. The treaty of IOSPE I² 402 is clearly something entirely separate from that reported in Polybius, not part of it, as E. H. Minns, *Scythians and Greeks* (Cambridge 1912) 518 n. 2, seems to have thought.

14) See Jacoby, FGrHist 2 B 154 F 7.

problem set by this evidence: if for $\phi\epsilon\acute{\upsilon}\gamma\omega\nu$ we read instead the aorist participle $\phi\upsilon\gamma\acute{\omega}\nu$, any confusion between Mithridates II and III disappears, and it becomes clear that Hieronymus is in agreement with the other literary sources in regarding Mithridates III of Cius as the founder of Pontus¹⁵). Mistaking the present participle of $\phi\epsilon\acute{\upsilon}\gamma\omega$ for the aorist, would be an easy scribal error, or an easy misrepresentation of Hieronymus by Lucian, who was presumably more interested in the man's age than in historical accuracy¹⁶). Hieronymus, then, does not strengthen Rostovtzeff's theory.

Second, if the treaty between Pharnaces and Chersonesus is to fall in May 179, then the era must start in 336/5. This is probably the year after the accession of Mithridates II, which Diodorus (16.90.2) places in the archonship at Athens of Phrynichus in 337/6. Assuming with Loeper that the Pontic year began in October, and with, among others, Bickermann, that the Attic year began in "high summer"¹⁷), there would not be any overlap between the Attic year 337/6 and the Pontic year 336/5. So if the accession of Mithridates II of Cius did mark the beginning of Pharnaces' era, then the era must have begun in 337/6, thus putting the treaty with Chersonesus in May 180, when Pharnaces' war was still going on – an unlikely, if not impossible time¹⁸).

The main argument against Rostovtzeff is that the literary evidence, including, as we have seen, Hieronymus, is quite certain that it was Mithridates III of Cius who became Mithridates I Ctistes of Pontus, the friend and contemporary of Demetrius, forced to flee from Antigonus to Paphlagonia, which he used as a

15) Meyer (supra n. 7) 36 produces the same result by suggesting the insertion of δ before Ἀντίγονον .

16) A small difficulty remains in that Mithridates I Ctistes of Pontus died in 266, and if he was at that time eighty four years old, he would have been born some twelve years before Demetrius. This hardly seems a sufficient difference to exclude the possibility of Plutarch regarding the two men, perhaps in a fairly loose sense, as 'contemporaries': see Meyer (supra n. 3) 158. If, however, this is regarded as a serious difficulty, and it is felt that the present participle $\phi\epsilon\acute{\upsilon}\gamma\omega\nu$ must be preserved, it could be argued that it was perhaps Mithridates II who lived to be eighty four, and to whom Hieronymus was referring, but that Lucian mistakenly attached the title Ctistes to him, and had him die in the wrong place.

17) Bickermann (supra n. 9) 21.

18) For the most recent discussion of the problem, see F. W. Walbank, *A Historical Commentary on Polybius*, vol. 3 (Oxford 1979) 20, who generally follows the scheme of Loeper and Rostovtzeff, but dates the treaty between Pharnaces and Chersonesus to 179 by suggesting that the Pontic era of Pharnaces began late in the Attic year 337/6.

base to establish the new kingdom and royal line of Pontus¹⁹). The sources cannot be interpreted in such a way as to attribute all this to Mithridates II of Cius. Rostovtzeff's identification of Mithridates II as Mithridates I Cistes of Pontus should be rejected²⁰).

III

This still leaves the problem of what era Pharnaces was using. That the Seleucid era starting in 312/311 might have been a natural choice for a king of Pontus to make, was also an idea of Rostovtzeff, although proposed only to be rejected, as this would place the treaty with Chersonesus in May 155 – too late, Rostovtzeff thought, for Pharnaces. The adoption of the Seleucid era by Pontus, however, is an attractive suggestion. Strong links were forged between the royal families of Pontus and Syria in the third century. Mithridates II married the sister of Seleucus II Callinicus (Euseb. Chron. 1 p. 118 Karst), and Laodice, daughter of Mithridates II, married Antiochus III (Polyb. 5.43.1–4)²¹). This latter marriage was the first occasion on which a ruler of one of the major Hellenistic monarchies married a princess from one of the small non-Macedonian ruling houses, and was, therefore, an important boost to the prestige of the junior kingdom²²). Antiochus' minister and vice-regent, Achaeus, also married into the Pontic royal family, when he took as his wife the Laodice who had been handed over by Mithridates II to Antiochus' Hierax and raised by Logbasis (Polyb. 5.74.5; 8.19.7; 8.20.11). Pharnaces himself married the Seleucid princess, Nysa (OGIS No. 771)²³). It would be

19) See Plut. Demetr. 4.1–4; Diod. 20.111.4; App. Mithr. 112; Strabo 12.3.41 C 562.

20) C. B. Welles, *Die hellenistische Welt. Propyläen Weltgeschichte*, vol. 3 (Berlin 1962) 439, appears to have adopted it, but with a strange and unexplained chronology. See also C. B. Welles, *Alexander and the Hellenistic World* (Toronto 1970) 261. C. Schneider, *Kulturgeschichte des Hellenismus*, vol. 1 (Munich 1967), follows Welles, but again gives no reasons or explanation.

21) For this Laodice see Walbank (*supra* n. 18) 75. For the marriage see H. H. Schmitt, *Untersuchungen zur Geschichte Antiochos' des Großen und seiner Zeit*, *Historia Einzelschr.* 6 (Wiesbaden 1964) 10; 112–116.

22) See J. Seibert, *Historische Beiträge zu den dynastischen Verbindungen in hellenistischer Zeit*, *Historia Einzelschr.* 10 (Wiesbaden 1967) 60.

23) See also F. Durrbach, *Choix d'inscriptions de Délos* (Paris 1921) p. 97 No. 73; P. Roussel and M. Launey (eds.), *Inscriptions de Délos* (Paris 1937) 1497 bis.

good policy for Pontus, trying to establish a place for itself in the Hellenistic world, to adopt the era used by the richer and more powerful kingdom of Syria – an era which was probably “the most broadly used and most widely understood” at that time²⁴). And 155 is not, in fact, too late for Pharnaces. Mithridates IV Philopator Philadelphus, Pharnaces’ successor, is mentioned first in the winter of 155/4 as an ally of Attalus II of Pergamum in his war against Bithynia (Polyb. 33.12.1). It used to be thought that Pharnaces died in 171/170 when Polybius (27.17) appears to be writing his obituary notice, but we know from the dedication of the Athenian people to Pharnaces and his wife Nysa that he was alive when Tychandros was archon at Athens, and this is now generally accepted as 160/159²⁵). With Pharnaces using the Seleucid era, the treaty with Chersonesus would have come right at the end of his reign. The precautions taken by the Chersonitans against possible hostile action from Pharnaces (IOSPE I² 402, lines 18–24) do seem to reflect a time when they were in conflict with the king of Pontus, but nothing necessitates the assumption that the conflict was very recent to the time of the treaty. As the second century progressed, the threat from the Scythians to the Greek cities on the north coast of the Black Sea increased, and it was in the middle of the second century that Olbia came under the power of the Scythian king, Scilurus²⁶). This would have been a worrying situation for the other Greek cities of the area, and may have induced the Chersonitans to accept help, with cautious provisions, even from their former enemy Pharnaces²⁷).

IV

Pharnaces died in 155/4. It may be possible to suggest a more accurate date for his accession to the throne of Pontus than the one

24) See A. Samuel, *Greek and Roman Chronology. Calendars and Years in Classical Antiquity* (Munich 1972) 246.

25) See Perl (*supra* n. 8) 301 n. 10.

26) See V. F. Gajdukevic, *Das Bosporanische Reich* (Berlin ²1971) 312; E. Belin de Ballu, *Olbia, cité antique du littoral nord de la Mer Noire* (Leiden 1972) 130; A. Wasowicz, *Olbia Pontique et son territoire. L'aménagement de l'espace* (Paris 1975) 109.

27) Professor S. M. Burstein of the University of California at Los Angeles has independently also come to the conclusion, as he very kindly informed me by letter, that Pharnaces was using the Seleucid era. His arguments, and discussion of the significance of this point, can now be seen in his article *The Aftermath of the Peace of Apamea. Rome and the Pontic War*, *AJAH* 5 (1980) 1–12.

usually assumed of about 185. The reign of Pharnaces marked the introduction of a more aggressive, expansionist foreign policy than that followed by his predecessors. That Pontus did not take advantage of, or take any part in, the struggle between Antiochus III and Rome, may in itself be an indication that the aggressive Pharnaces had not yet become king and Mithridates III was still ruling. Prusias of Bithynia had also remained neutral in the war against Antiochus, but Rome's settlement of Asia after the war involved the allotment to the Pergamene king Eumenes of some land previously occupied by Prusias. This resulted in the outbreak of war between Bithynia and Pergamum, probably not much later than 188²⁸). Pompeius Trogus (Prol. 32) tells us that Eumenes was pitted against Ortiagon the Gaul, Pharnaces and Prusias²⁹). Philip V of Macedon also took sides against Eumenes (Polyb. 23.1.4). When and why Pharnaces joined the coalition is not definitely known. The fighting seems to have started on the advice of Hannibal who was helping Prusias (Just. Epit. 32.4.2), and Cornelius Nepos (Hann. 10.1) tells us that Prusias was in Pontus when Hannibal joined him after escaping from Crete. His presence in Pontus may indicate that that kingdom was involved from the very start of the war, and as a result, we might surmise that Pharnaces became king in about 188 rather than a few years later. Habicht has raised the possibility that although Pompeius Trogus mentions Pharnaces among the combatants in the war between Bithynia and Pergamum, Trogus may have confused this war with the one that followed shortly, between Pharnaces and his neighbours³⁰). Prusias' presence in Pontus, however, when Hannibal arrived, does seem to point to a connection between the kings of Bithynia and Pontus, and provide some further evidence for Pharnaces' involvement in the earlier war.

V

One more question remains concerning eras. From 96/5 Mithridates Eupator used on his coins the royal Bithynian era which

28) On the date see Habicht, RE 23.1 (1957) col. 1098. For the war see also Chr. Habicht, *Über die Kriege zwischen Pergamon und Bithynia*, Hermes 84 (1956) 90 ff. E. V. Hansen, *The Attalids of Pergamum* (Ithaca 1971) 97 ff.

29) Walbank (supra n. 18) 254 says that there is no evidence for Pharnaces' involvement in this war, but he has presumably forgotten this passage of Pompeius Trogus, which he does in fact cite in volume I of his commentary (p. 300).

30) Habicht, RE 23.1 (1957) col. 1099.

started in 297/6. Which king was responsible for changing from the Seleucid era to the Bithynian? We have no era dates for Mithridates IV and only two for Mithridates V Euergetes, 161 and 173. The year 161 appears on an inscription from Abonuteichus, honouring the strategos Alcimus son of Menophilus³¹); and 173 is the date on a coin of Euergetes previously regarded as a fake, but now restored to respectability by Robert³²). Unfortunately on both the Seleucid era and the Bithynian, these two dates fall within the possible limits of Euergetes' reign (by the Bithynian era 173 = 125/124 B.C., 161 = 137/136 B.C.; by the Seleucid era 173 = 140/139 B.C., 161 = 152/151 B.C.). Use of the Seleucid era would put the Abonuteichus inscription in 152/151, thus leaving only a short reign for Mithridates IV, but that is no problem, as we know that Euergetes was ruling at the time of the Third Punic War in which he sent help to Rome (App. Mithr. 10), and it is quite possible that he had taken over by 152/1³³). Robert has convincingly identified the reverse type of the coin of year 173 and of a newly discovered tetradrachm of Mithridates V as a statue of Apollo Delius³⁴). The choice of type was inspired by Euergetes'

31) See Th. Reinach, A Stele from Abonuteichos, NC 5 (1905) 113–119. Alcimus was the man honoured, not Daippus son of Criton, as stated by L. Robert, Monnaies et textes grecques. II: Deux tétradrachmes de Mithridate V Euergete, roi du Pont, JS July/Sept. 1978, 153: Daippus was the priest proposing the motion to honour Alcimus.

32) Robert (supra n. 31) 160–163.

33) The inscription recording the *amicitia* and *societas* between Rome and Mithridates IV (OGIS 375) does not help to pin down the latter's dates. It was part of a monument on the Capitol in Rome containing other honorary inscriptions dedicated by kings and states, including one of the Lycians thanking Rome for the return of their ancestral freedom. Th. Reinach, L'histoire par les monnaies (Paris 1902) 128; Remarques sur le décret d'Athènes en l'honneur de Pharnace I^{er}, BCH 30 (1906) 47, dated the Lycian dedication to 167, and thought that the Mithridates inscription must be of the same date. J. A. O. Larsen, The Araxa Inscription and the Lycian Confederacy, CP 51 (1956) 158–9 argued that the inscriptions do not all have to be dated within a short time of each other: it is possible that the dedication of the Lycians was the earliest and most important, but that other people were later allowed to put their inscriptions on the monument. Recently, and most persuasively, R. Mellor, The Dedications on the Capitoline Hill, Chiron 8 (1978) 319–330, has suggested another interpretation of these dedications: the monument was destroyed or damaged in the fire of 83, and the inscriptions reinscribed, thus explaining why they all appear part of a single group of Sullan date. Mellor's arguments should remove any temptation to follow Mommsen and Degraffi in believing that Mithridates Philopator Philadelphus was not Pharnaces' I successor, but an otherwise unattested son of Mithridates Eupator.

34) Robert (supra n. 31) 160–3.

donations to Apollo, and the Delian statues set up in honour of Euergetes by the gymnasiarch Seleucus in 129/8, and by Aeschylus son of Zopyrus, were in recognition of these donations³⁵). The issuing of the coin, however, does not seem to make any more sense in 125/4 (Bithynian era) than it does in 140/39 (Seleucid era). Although Euergetes may have bestowed some particular kindness on the island of Delos at about the time Seleucus was gymnasiarch, it is quite possible that the king's devotion to Apollo did not just belong to the later part of his reign, but was a feature of his policy all along. For the reverse types chosen by the kings of Pontus for their coins seem to have remained the same throughout their reigns: one king used fundamentally the same type, sometimes with slight variations³⁶). So if we picture Euergetes coining in the early part of his reign, it was probably Apollo Delius who appeared on the reverse.

As we have seen, the adoption of the Seleucid era by Pharnaces is easy to understand: Syria was richer, more powerful, friendly, and its era widely used and understood. It is more difficult to think of reasons why Pontus should change to the Bithynian era. Reinach suggested that Pontus was merely copying her more economically developed neighbour³⁷), but although Bithynia was indeed rich and strong³⁸), it is not clear that it was substantially more advanced than the kingdom of Mithridates Euergetes, who, in Rostovtzeff's opinion, was "certainly the wealthiest and most powerful king in Asia Minor in the last decades of the second century B.C."³⁹). Moreover, the likeliest circumstances in which one state would adopt the era of another would surely be where a spirit of cooperation and a certain degree of friendliness prevail, but relations between Bithynia and Pontus, where we know about

35) For the dedication of Aeschylus see Roussel and Launey (supra n. 23) No. 1557. For that of Seleucus see OGIS 366; Durrbach (supra n. 23) 168 No. 99; Roussel and Launey (supra n. 23) No. 1558.

36) Mithridates IV Philopator Philadelphus is not really an exception: he used one type for coins issued on his own behalf (Perseus), and one type for joint issues with his sister wife Laodice (Hera and Zeus). For the coinage of the kings of Pontus see Th. Reinach, *Trois royaumes de l'Asie Mineure: Cappadoce Bithynie Pont* (Paris 1888); W. H. Waddington, E. Babelon, Th. Reinach, *Recueil général des monnaies grecques d'Asie Mineure* (Paris 1912–1925; reedited Hildesheim 1976); SNG Deutschland, *Sammlung v. Aulock*, 1 (Berlin 1957); 15 (Berlin 1967).

37) See Reinach (supra n. 36) 133. W. H. Bennett, *The Death of Sertorius and the Coin*, *Historia* 10 (1961) 461, accepts Reinach's argument.

38) See M. Rostovtzeff, *The Social and Economic History of the Hellenistic World* (Oxford 1941) II, 828.

39) Rostovtzeff (supra n. 38) II, 831–2.

them, were, on the whole, extremely unfriendly⁴⁰). Admittedly Pharnaces had helped Prusias I against Pergamum, but this did not protect Prusias II from Pharnaces' expansionist plans during the war of 183 to 179⁴¹). Mithridates IV also fought against Bithynia, on the side of Pergamum (Polyb. 33.12.1)⁴²). The only indication we have of Mithridates Euergetes' relationship with Bithynia is the reference in a speech of Gaius Gracchus to an unknown situation, in which the interests of Euergetes and Nicomedes are in conflict⁴³). It is possible that Euergetes may have developed more friendly relations with Bithynia, but the only clear instance of cooperation between the two kingdoms that we know of came in about 108/7, when Mithridates Eupator and Nicomedes III launched a joint invasion of Paphlagonia⁴⁴). It may well have been then that Eupator decided that Pontus should adopt the Bithynian era, and rather than change the system again when he fell out a few years later with Nicomedes over Cappadocia (Just. Epit. 38.1.1 ff.), simply persevered with it. By the time that he invaded Paphlagonia, Eupator's efforts had already been directed towards building an empire around the Black Sea, and during his reign, by conquest and alliance he came to control a large part of its entire circuit⁴⁵). The one area that he did not control or exert an influence over, apart from an inhospitable stretch of the east coast south of Gorgippia (App. Mithr. 67; 102; Strabo 11.2.13 C 496), was Bithynia. Perhaps at an early stage in his plans Eupator realized the obstacle that the strong independent kingdom of Bithynia

40) For the history of Bithynia see Geyer, *RE* 17.1 (1936) col. 493–499 (Nicomedes I–IV); Magie (supra n. 9) 311–320; G. Vitucci, *Il regno di Bitinia* (Rome 1953); Habicht, *RE* 10 A (1972) col. 387–397 (Ziaelas), col. 448–455 (Ziopoetes); *RE* 23.1 (1957) col. 1086–1127 (Prusias I and II).

41) For details of the war see Olshausen (supra n. 3) col. 410–413.

42) For this war see Habicht (supra n. 28) 101–110.

43) See E. Malcovati (ed.), *Oratorum Romanorum Fragmenta Liberae Rei Publicae* (Torino 1976) 187–8.

44) Just. Epit. 37.4.3 ff.; 38.5.4; 38.7.10. The evidence for the date of the invasion is the Bithynian coin issue of era year 190 (i. e. 108/7 B.C.) which displays on the reverse a palm, signifying, it is to be presumed, the victorious enterprise in Paphlagonia: see Waddington, Babelon, Reinach (supra n. 36) 231 No. 40.

45) The chronology of all his activities in the area is not clear, but Justin (Epit. 37.3.1; 38.7.4–5) does imply that the first enterprise of the young king was the conquest of the Crimea and Bosporan kingdom. For Mithridates Eupator in the Black Sea, see E. Salomone Gaggero, *Réactions politiques et militaires de Mithridate VI Eupator avec les populations et les cités de la Thrace et avec les colonies grecques de la Mer Noire occidentale*, in: Pulpudeva. *Semaines philopolitaines de l'histoire et de la culture thrace* 2 (1978) 294–305.

might place in the way of his Black Sea ambitions: his alliance with Bithynia and adoption of its era could then be seen as part of his attempt to unite politically and economically the countries of the Euxine⁴⁶).

Another possibility suggests itself – that the adoption of someone else's era could be interpreted as an act of hostility. If that is the case, a strong argument can again be made that Eupator was responsible: his first dated issue of coins in 96/5 could then be seen as a threat that he was intending to conquer Bithynia – a threat that soon became a reality.

In conclusion, we cannot be certain which king first introduced the Bithynian era in Pontus, but the best candidate seems to be Mithridates VI Eupator, his father Euergetes having kept to the Seleucid era⁴⁷).

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46) Perl (supra n. 8) 329–330 attributes these motives for the introduction of the Bithynian era to Mithridates V Euergetes, but they are much better suited to Eupator. Euergetes' activities and, apparently, ambitions, were limited to Asia Minor. For details of, and bibliography on Euergetes' reign see Olshausen (supra n. 3) col. 416–420.

47) Bennett (supra n. 37) 461; P. Pollak, A Bithynian Hoard of the 1st Century B.C., ANSMusN 16 (1970) 51–2; F. Kleiner, The Giresun Hoard, ANSMusN 19 (1974) 8, all favour Eupator but curiously do not discuss what era Mithridates V was using.