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Power and coinage

The portrait tetradrachms of Eumenes II

ABSTRACT*

Among other innovations in coinage, the portrait tetradrachms of Eumenes II testify to the interest that the Attalid king showed in coinage. It is difficult to date these coins using purely numismatic criteria. The generally favoured late dating is based on the notion that this was a short-lived coinage, but it may well have been struck – possibly at intervals – over a relatively long period of Eumenes II's reign. In this paper I defend an early dating for the starting point of this coinage, in the first half of the reign and even in the first years, before the Treaty of Apamea. The historical context of the rising power of Rome in the Eastern Mediterranean after the Second Macedonian War may explain the original features of this coinage and its iconography, which shows a will to affirm a personal power and also suggests a connection with Rome through the Pergamene cult of the Kabeiroi.

Keywords: Attalids, Rome, Hellenistic kingship, cults, iconography

Introduction

Eumenes II is a major figure in the Attalid dynasty.¹ His reign is one of the longest in the dynasty, as he reigned from 197 to 158 BC, i.e. over 39 years.² This is only slightly less than his father Attalos I who reigned from 241 to 197, i.e. 44 years. His reign is also one of the best documented: we can rely on the works of the historians Polybius and Livy. To these the inscriptions can be added – not only those of Pergamon, but also those of the other cities of the kingdom, for Eumenes II greatly expanded the kingdom during his reign – as well as other sources, both archaeological and numismatic.

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¹ On the Attalid dynasty, see Hansen 1971².

² Strab. 13.4.2 (C 624); Petzl 1978, 263–267; Mulliez 1998, 238–240.

Philetairos founded the dynasty, and his actions display both fidelity to his sovereigns and an aspiration to independence. The consolidation of this independence came with his successor Eumenes. Attalos I is the first king ($\betaασιλεύς$) in the lineage, a title that he adopted after his great victories against the Gauls, exalted by monuments, yet these victories were fragile and short-lived. As for Eumenes II, he was not only the king who defeated the barbarous Gauls like his predecessor but, following the Treaty of Apamea in 188 BC, he appears also as a statesman, a founder of cities, and an organizer of an extended territory.

Eumenes II came to the throne in 197. The Attalid estate was at that time reduced to a meagre territory around Pergamon,³ following the Seleucid reconquest under Antiochos III. Nevertheless, Eumenes II continued the policy of alliance with Rome that had been initiated by Attalos I. This policy worked well for him. The Attalid sovereign was the great beneficiary of the victory of Rome in the war against Antiochos III in 189. The expansion of the kingdom after the Treaty of Apamea, this time guaranteed by Rome, proved lasting. Asia Minor underwent a lasting change: the province of Asia, created following Attalos III's bequest to Rome in 133, corresponds to the former Attalid kingdom.

The kingdom did not, however, enjoy subsequent peace. In the decades that followed the Treaty of Apamea, Eumenes II had first to face Prousias I as well as the Gauls (186–183) and then Pharnaces of Pontos (183–179). Finally, he took part, again on the side of Rome, in the Third Macedonian War (171–168), before being forced to deal with a new revolt of the Gauls (168–166). The end of the reign of Eumenes II is marked by a deterioration of his relations with Rome, which recognized the autonomy of Galatia in 166. The work of

³ Pol. 32.8.3.

Eumenes II is important, in areas as varied as the organization of his territory (as witnessed by the foundation of the city of Toriaion),⁴ and of the cults (instauration of the penteteric Nikephoria).⁵

Eumenes II's endeavours are important and original in the monetary domain too. Many innovations in the Attalid coinage take place during his reign.⁶ Certainly, at least for a while, the striking of the Philetairoi⁷ and of the Alexanders⁸ continued, but we also see the introduction of new coinages in silver, following the Attic standard,⁹ of the cistophoric coinage,¹⁰ and of new series of bronze coinage.¹¹ So Eumenes II breaks away from the coinage practices of his predecessors on several aspects. With the cistophoric coinage, we witness the creation of a new monetary landscape which long outlasted the end of the dynasty,¹² and undoubtedly proved adequate both to the needs and the particularities of the Attalid territory, and to a new geopolitical context, that of the establishment of Roman domination in Asia Minor.

The coins that most reveal Eumenes II's interest in coinage are undoubtedly the very rare tetradrachms with his name and his personal types, particularly his portrait. A specimen of this coinage has recently come to light; new hypotheses have been formulated concerning contemporaneous coinages and the history of Pergamon's neighbouring cities – these new developments prompt us to reconsider this coinage. By analysing the portrait tetradrachms of Eumenes II, which break away from the Attalid tradition, and replacing these in a more general context by comparison with some contemporaneous coinages, I intend to probe how Eumenes II used monetary iconography, which conception of kingship this reveals, and how the king conformed to the restrictions inherent to the new importance of Rome in the Eastern Mediterranean. After a brief account of the coinage, I shall re-examine its chronology and dating, and suggest a new interpretation for this coinage.

The portrait tetradrachms of Eumenes II: A presentation

Up to 2013 we knew of two specimens of the portrait tetradrachms of Eumenes II, the one long kept in London,¹³ the other bought in 1983 by the Cabinet of Paris.¹⁴ A third example appeared in 2013 in an auction catalogue¹⁵ (Figs. 1–3).

These tetradrachms show on the obverse the draped and diademed bust of the ruler. On the reverse we can see two naked standing figures represented in a symmetrical manner, each holding a lance and wearing a pointed bonnet with a star on its peak, all within a laurel wreath. The coins bear the legend *Βασιλέως Εύμενου*, which makes it possible to attribute them to Eumenes II. The reverse type represents the Kabeiroi: the identification is confirmed by a comparison with the silver tetradrachms attributed to the island of Syros in the Cyclades: the same reverse type appears there, accompanied by the legend *Θεῶν Καβείρων Συρίων*, which is generally interpreted as a two part legend “(coin) of the Kabeiroi gods / (coin) of the Syrians”, *Συρίων* being understood as an *ethnikon* (Fig. 4).¹⁶ An attribution to Pergamon for these tetradrachms was recently proposed,¹⁷ which I think rather doubtful; I will come back to this point. Whatever attribution we retain, the reverse type of these tetradrachms is the same as that on the tetradrachms with the name of Eumenes II, and the legend *Θεῶν Καβείρων* allows us to identify the reverse type of the Eumenes II tetradrachms.

These tetradrachms diverge from the Attalid tradition on several grounds. Until this time the Attalids had struck two silver coinages: the Alexanders as in other Hellenistic states, and the Philetairoi, a coinage that was unique to the Attalids, and initiated during the lifetime of Philetairos. The first Philetairoi bore on the obverse the portrait of Seleukos I. This was however rapidly replaced by the portrait of Philetairos himself, probably during his lifetime, according to the dating proposed by G. Le Rider (based on evidence from the Meydancikkale hoard) and generally accepted since.¹⁸ Until the reign of Eumenes II, the loyalty to the founder of the dynasty had prevailed in the silver coinage, as was the case with the coinage of the Lagids. In striking tetradrachms in his own name and with his own effigy, Eumenes II affirmed his personal power.

⁴ SEG 47.1745; Thonemann 2013, 5–7; Ma 2013, 57.

⁵ Allen 1983, app. IV, nos. 9–12; CID IV, no. 107; Wörrle 2007, 508.

⁶ For a complete survey, see now Marcellesi 2012a, 115–161. See also Meadows 2013, 163–205.

⁷ Westermark 1960, group VII; Marcellesi 2012a, annexe 1, no. 42.

⁸ Price 1991, nos. 1473–95; Marcellesi 2012a, annexe 1, no. 32.

⁹ Marcellesi 2012a, annexe 1, nos. 43–44 and *infra*.

¹⁰ Kleiner & Noe 1977; Marcellesi 2012a, annexe 1, nos. 45–46.

¹¹ Marcellesi 2012a, annexe 1, nos. 53–65.

¹² Marcellesi 2012a, 164–167.

¹³ BMC *Mysia*, Pergamum no. 47, pl. 24, no. 5.

¹⁴ SNG *BnF Mysie*, no. 1627.

¹⁵ Numismatik Lanz München, Auction 156, 2 June 2013, lot 177.

¹⁶ Nicolet-Pierre & Amandry 1992.

¹⁷ Meadows 2013, 184–186.

¹⁸ Davesne & Le Rider 1989, 333–340; Marcellesi 2012a, 88–92; Meadows 2013, 156–158; De Callataÿ 2013, 208–209.



Fig. 1. Portrait tetradrachm of Eumenes II, London. Cast. Boebringer 1972, pl. 2, 1 (British Museum, BMC Mysia, Pergamum no. 47).



Fig. 4. Syros' tetradrachm. Fritz Rudolf Künker GmbH & Co. KG, Osnabrück, Auction 236, 7 October 2013, lot 59 (= Auktion Fritz Rudolf Künker 136, 2008, no. 617, photograph Lübbe & Wiedemann, Stuttgart). Cf. Nicolet-Pierre & Amandry 1992, 297, no. 3.



Fig. 2. Portrait tetradrachm of Eumenes II, Paris. Bibliothèque nationale de France, 1983–248. Marcellesi 2012a, pl. 4, no. 43.



Fig. 3. Portrait tetradrachm of Eumenes II, auction catalogue. Numismatik Lanz München, Auction 156, 2 June 2013, lot 177.



The impossibility of dating by numismatic criteria

Three distinct datings have recently been suggested for this coinage: towards the beginning of Eumenes II's reign,¹⁹ shortly after the middle of his reign,²⁰ and also in the final years of his reign.²¹ This lack of agreement is due, as we shall see, to the difficulty in dating these tetradrachms based on purely numismatic criteria. Two questions arise, that of the length of this coinage (long or brief), and that of the date of its beginning.

¹⁹ Marcellesi 2012a, 125; 2012b, 160–162, 165.

²⁰ In 172 (Numismatik Lanz München, Auction 156, 2 June 2013, lot 177): see *infra*.

²¹ Meadows 2013, 173–174.

DIES AND ISSUES

Let us first consider the dies. The specimens from London and Paris were struck with two different pairs of dies (Figs. 1–2). On the reverse the control marks are different and this has an impact on the disposition of the various elements. On the obverse, the style is very similar, but the tresses of hair on the forehead are treated in a different style. The new specimen from 2013 (Fig. 3) was struck with the same dies as the Paris specimen. We thus know of two different obverse dies for three well-attested specimens.

To this we should perhaps add a third die, held in the Delépierre collection. H. Nicolet-Pierre reported an Athenian *stephanophoros* tetradrachm whose obverse shows traces of an overstrike: one can see on it the ends of a royal diadem and the strands of hair on the top of the head which are similar in style to those on Eumenes II portrait tetradrachms²² (Fig. 5). If we accept the identification of the overstrike, then there are three obverse dies for four specimens: one must note that the diadem's ends point upwards, contrary to what can be seen on the two known obverse dies.

Concerning the issues, we know of two (for three specimens whose reverse is known): a ribbed *thyrsus* – ΔΙΑ (London); and a *stylis* – AP (Paris, Munich). It is thus difficult to determine whether we are dealing with a striking over a longer or shorter period of time. Nicolet-Pierre did not rule out the possibility that the two issues were some years distant²³ and it is possible that there were other issues. This coinage, despite its limited number of known specimens, may well have been struck over a relatively long portion of the reign, perhaps intermittently.²⁴

²² SNG Delépierre, no. 1486; Nicolet-Pierre 1989, 203, n. 4 and pl. 17, no. 3.

²³ Nicolet-Pierre 1989, 208: “les deux émissions d'Eumène sont assez dissemblables pour qu'on puisse les imaginer séparées par quelques années”.

²⁴ Marcellesi 2012a, 123–125.

Hoards

Do the hoards provide any indications? The Paris specimen is thought to have come from the hoard of Ma'aret En-Nu'man.²⁵ This hoard was found in 1980, 50 miles to the south-east of Antioch, near the road from Tripolis to Aleppo, and immediately dispersed. It was entirely reconstructed by H. Mattingly. He produced a catalogue of 536 coins, which is but part of the hoard, but he does not explain in any way the criteria he used to justify this reconstruction. Mattingly believed that the portrait tetradrachm of Eumenes II belonged "in all probability" to the hoard of Ma'aret En-Nu'man.²⁶ The inclusion of the portrait tetradrachm of Eumenes II in this hoard is based primarily on the presence in the hoard of a tetradrachm of Athena Nikephoros,²⁷ a series which is also very rare. We should however note that H. Nicolet-Pierre considered its provenance to be unknown.²⁸ The provenance of the Paris coin is thus very uncertain.

However, if one agrees to follow Mattingly's hypothesis, how far does the hoard help us towards the dating of the portrait tetradrachms? The burial of the hoard of Ma'aret En-Nu'man is placed at *c.* 162, as indicated by the coins of Antiochos V. This gives us a *terminus ante quem* for the portrait tetradrachms of Eumenes II, but it is very close to the date of the king's death. In the hoard, the Seleucid coins go back to Antiochos I and all the Seleucid kings are represented up to Antiochos V. Concerning the Philetairoi, the two oldest specimens belong to groups III and IV, dated to the middle of the 3rd century. The portrait tetradrachm of Eumenes II is in good condition. This may mean that it was struck shortly before the burial of the hoard, or that it was handled very little.²⁹ As there is no argument, as we have seen, precluding a relatively long striking period for that series, my contention is that we cannot draw any exact information from this hoard as to the initial date of striking of the portrait tetradrachms of Eumenes II.

Connections to other coinages

The already-mentioned overstrike, if we accept its identification, allows us to connect the portrait tetradrachms of Eumenes II with the first issues of the *stephanophoros* coinage of Athens, but the dating of these last is also being discussed, from an early dating in the 180s to a late dating *c.* 167/6.³⁰



Fig. 5. Athenian *stephanophoros* tetradrachm. Overstrike on an Eumenes II tetradrachm? Bibliothèque nationale de France, SNG Delepierre, no. 1486.

Even if we retain the late dating (*c.* 167/6), the overstrike proves that the portrait tetradrachms of Eumenes II began before the 160s, almost the same *terminus ante quem* as with the Ma'aret En-Nu'man hoard.

The portrait tetradrachms of Eumenes II are connected with group VII of the Philetairoi, with similar (*stylis* – AP)³¹ or closely related (*thyrsus* – ΔI or Δ over A)³² control marks. The *stylis* – AP issue belongs to the first phase of group VII. Group VII is thought to begin in the 190s, mainly because it does not feature in the Mektepini hoard, which is dated from this period.³³ The frequency of production of group VII is completely unknown.

There are links between control marks on the later issues of group VII and on the first group of Pergamene cistophoric coinage, but the starting date for the cistophoric coinage is also hotly disputed: several propositions were recently reaffirmed, from an early dating before 190³⁴ to a late dating *c.* 167/6.³⁵ This last suggestion is mainly justified by a connection with Alabanda coinage with civic types and based on the so-called

²⁵ Mattingly 1993a, 74, no. 178. The provenance of the other two specimens remains completely unknown.

²⁶ Mattingly 1993a, 83.

²⁷ Mattingly 1993a, 80 no. 467.

²⁸ Nicolet-Pierre 1989, 203.

²⁹ On the difficulty of dating a coinage based on the freshness of a coin in a given hoard, see Meadows 2013, 166–167.

³⁰ Thompson 1961; Lewis 1962; Boehringer 1972, 22–39; Mørkholm 1984. Cf. Flament 2007, 146–152.

³¹ Nicolet-Pierre 1989, 208 and table 4, no. 13.

³² Nicolet-Pierre 1989, table 4, no. 18; table 5, nos. 21 and 24. Meadows 2013, 166 unites 18 and 24 as a single issue.

³³ Marcellesi 2012a, 122–123, 135–136. This hoard contains 752 tetradrachms. It is large enough to be considered a representative sample. It contains only 14 Philetairoi. Meadows 2013, 164 mentions two other hoards, Ayaz-In (IGCH 1413) and CH 10.292, but the first (174 known coins) does not contain any specimen of Philetairoi, and the second (find-spot unknown) contains only two Philetairoi out of a total of about 800 coins. These two hoards show above all the low proportion of the Philetairoi in the circulation (cf. Marcellesi 2012a, 104).

³⁴ Marcellesi 2012a, 132–145.

³⁵ Meadows 2013, 175–181.



Fig. 6. Athena Nikephoros tetradrachm. Bibliothèque nationale de France, 1974–1065. Marcellesi 2012a, pl. 4, no. 44.

cistophoric weight-standard.³⁶ Yet the dating of the Alabanda coinage remains uncertain, and the time-gap between the beginning of cistophoric coinage and the Alabanda coinage based on the same weight-standard may have been longer than suggested by A. Meadows. The late dating suggested by Meadows did not convince R. Ashton, who still prefers an early dating, in the late 190s or in the 180s,³⁷ whereas F. De Callataÿ is in favour of an intermediate dating c. 180–170³⁸ and S. Psoma merely agrees to a pre-163 date.³⁹ The early dating before 190 seems to me the only one which takes into account all the documentation that is currently available to us.

The details of this debate must remain outside the limited scope of this article. Whatever its conclusions, there is no ground to preclude the possibility that the first issues of group VII may have been struck over a very limited period of time, and that the *stylis* – AP issue may have been struck either in the late 190s or shortly afterwards. Finally, the striking of the Eumenes II portrait tetradrachms could have begun a few years earlier. An initial striking date in the first years of Eumenes II's reign cannot be ruled out.

Iconography

The wreath on the reverse of the portrait tetradrachms of Eumenes II has also been used to aid dating, and compared to the Athenian *stephanophoros* coinage and also to the so-called

“wreathed” coinages struck in several cities in Asia Minor.⁴⁰ On the tetradrachms of Athena Nikephoros struck in Pergamon starting in c. 181, there is no wreath (Fig. 6); the fact that there is one on the tetradrachms of Eumenes II led R. Bauslaugh, following others, to consider that these were necessarily later than those of Athena Nikephoros.⁴¹ U. Westermarck has pointed out that Eumenes II portrait tetradrachms belong to the category of royal coinages, with which they must be compared, and an oak wreath features on the reverse of certain Philip V tetradrachms (Fig. 8).⁴²

Tetradrachms without wreath are attested in Asia Minor until a late date, for example the tetradrachms with the types of Miletus (up to the middle of the 2nd century),⁴³ or those in the name of Athena Ilias (Fig. 7).⁴⁴ They are contemporaneous to the “wreathed” coinages. And if one agrees to an early dating for the beginning of Athenian *stephanophoros* coinage and of cistophoric coinage, the presence of a wreath on Eumenes II portrait tetradrachms cannot be used as an argument to preclude an early dating during his reign.

Some researchers have attempted to date the coins based on the portrait of the king and his putative age, as Eumenes II was born around 220.⁴⁵ The shortcomings of this approach have been duly pointed out.⁴⁶ The figure is that of a young man. This would support an early dating in Eumenes' reign. However, an older king could easily be portrayed at an ideal younger age, as is the case in the coinage of Antiochos IV of Syria, whose monetary portrait is more realistic at the beginning of his reign, representing a 40-year-old man (Fig. 11)⁴⁷ than later, when the king has himself pictured as a beautiful young man (Fig. 12).⁴⁸

Thus purely numismatic criteria do not allow for the accurate dating of the beginning of the Eumenes II portrait coinage within his reign.

Dating and historical likelihood

Consequently one has to resort to arguments of historical likelihood. The dates suggested so far relied mainly on the interpretation of the reverse type. The two figures represented in a symmetrical manner are generally interpreted as an allu-

³⁶ Meadows 2013, 177–178.

³⁷ Ashton 2013, 245–249.

³⁸ De Callataÿ 2013, 218–227.

³⁹ Psoma 2013, 278: “at some point before 163 BC”.

⁴⁰ Boehringer 1972, 14–15.
⁴¹ Bauslaugh 1982, 41–43.
⁴² Westermarck 1981, 20, and earlier Boehringer 1972, 16.
⁴³ Marcellesi 2004, 132–133 and 140–142, 181 no. 46.
⁴⁴ Bellinger 1961, 23–36, T36-T104, *passim*.
⁴⁵ *RE XI* (1907), *s.v.* ‘Eumenes’ 6: Eumenes II (H. Willrich).
⁴⁶ Boehringer 1972, 11–12, 14; Westermarck 1981, 20.
⁴⁷ *SC II*, nos. 1373–74, 1395; Boehringer 1972, 141 and pl. 21, 1.
⁴⁸ *SC II*, nos. 1377 and 1400; Boehringer 1972, 143–144 and pl. 20, 1. Cf. Mørkholm 1963.



Fig. 7. Athena Ilias tetradrachm. CGB Numismatique Paris (v 47-0103).



Fig. 8. Philip V tetradrachm: Macedonian shield with Perseus' head as an episemon / club within an oak wreath. Cast. Boehringer 1972, pl. 7, 1 (Naples F 6684).

sion to the good relations between Eumenes II and his brother Attalos, the future Attalos II, who played a part in running affairs and was later associated to the throne – because the son of Eumenes II, the future Attalos III, was yet too young to reign.⁴⁹ The title *φιλάδελφος* is attested for both Eumenes II and for his brother Attalos II by inscriptions.⁵⁰

Various scholars have sought which historical episode could prompt the striking of the portrait tetradrachms.

A STRIKING BY ATTALOS IN 172?

R. Bauslaugh considered that this exceptional coinage, which diverges from Attalid tradition, could not have been struck by Eumenes II himself during his lifetime. He preferred to see in it a coinage struck by the future Attalos II in a very specific context.⁵¹

In 172, during the period that immediately precedes the Third Macedonian War, Perseus organized an attempt on Eumenes II's life at Delphoi. Eumenes II escaped, and, while he was believed to be dead, took refuge for a while in Aegina. During this time, believing his brother dead, Attalos took on the title of king and married queen Stratonike, Eumenes II's wife. When the truth came out in Pergamon and Eumenes II returned, he didn't punish his brother, but merely told him off.⁵²

Bauslaugh proposed that we should recognize in the portrait tetradrachms of Eumenes II a posthumous coinage struck by Attalos at this particular point in time in order to legitimize his power. The issuing of this coinage would have then ceased as soon as it became known that Eumenes II was not dead. This is the dating and the interpretation adopted by the auction catalogue of 2013.

⁴⁹ For discussions of the filiation between Eumenes II and Attalos III, see Hopp 1977, 16–26; Will 1982, 417.

⁵⁰ *OGIS* 302–304. Cf. Bauslaugh 1982, 48.

⁵¹ Bauslaugh 1982, 47–50.

⁵² Pol. 22.18.5, 27.6.2; Liv. 42.15.3–42.16.9, 42.18.4; Diod. 29.fr.34; Plut. *Moralia* 184B, 489D–F. App. *Maced.* 11, 4. *SIG³* 643, ll. 29–34.

The hypothesis is ingenious and not impossible, but it raises many objections. Firstly, the historical episode itself presents some problems of interpretation. May we not imagine that in reality the two brothers were in agreement and that they acted out this masquerade for one reason or another (in preparation for a war)? This would explain why Eumenes II did not react more violently upon his return to Pergamon. Above all, there is no reason to suppose that the portrait tetradrachms were a posthumous issue, given that this coinage, in any case quite exceptional for the Attalids, can easily be explained as an issue by Eumenes II himself. Bauslaugh's complicated hypothesis has thus not been adopted by other scholars.⁵³

In fact, breaking from the Attalid tradition is witnessed by other coinages under the reign of Eumenes II and can be explained precisely by the king's interest in coinage and its usefulness as an instrument of propaganda.⁵⁴ I believe that we must once and for all abandon the hypothesis of a striking under the control of anyone other than Eumenes II himself.

⁵³ Let us mention the hypothesis made by Mattingly 1993b, 281 who suggests that Eumenes II portrait tetradrachms were struck to commemorate the episode when, in 168, after his defeat at the hands of Rome, Perseus took refuge in Samothrace, together with Evander, who made the attempt on Eumenes' life in 172: the Romans managed to deny the attacker sanctuary, so Perseus fled before surrendering to Roman authorities (Liv. 45.2.5; 45.4.3; 45.5–6). This hypothesis has not prevailed.

⁵⁴ I think the king did intervene in the choice of coin types. Hedlund 2008, 229–242 has shown that in the Roman Empire this choice did not always lie with the Emperor alone, but also with regional authorities. This is an interesting and groundbreaking hypothesis which fits the Roman Empire, as it is both vast and mutating in the second half of the 4th century AD. The situation for the Attalid kingdom in the 2nd century BC is quite different. It is a small kingdom, even after the Apamea Treaty; striking took place in the city of Pergamon, where the king resided; Attalid sovereigns are known to have shown interest in works of art promoting their power. As a consequence, one cannot imagine that the king should not supervise closely the introduction of a coinage such as the portrait tetradrachms and the choice of types. For an interesting theoretical discussion of image-based power communication and the idea of propaganda, see Hedlund 2008, 21–39.



Fig. 9. Philip V tetradrachm: king's portrait / Athena. Cast. Boehringer 1972, pl. 7, 6 (Auction catalogue).



Fig. 10. Perseus tetradrachm: king's portrait / eagle on a thunderbolt. Cast. Boehringer 1972, pl. 7, 5 (British Museum).

A LATE DATE: AFTER 166?

A late dating has generally been preferred, at the end of Eumenes II's reign, after 166 and before the *terminus ante quem* of c. 162 given by the Ma'aret En-Nu'man hoard.⁵⁵ The main arguments are as follows:

First, the reverse type must refer to the closer association of Attalos II to the throne at the end of the reign. Secondly, these exceptional issues probably celebrate Eumenes II's victory over the Gauls in 166, in the same manner as the tetradrachms of Athena Nikephoros are linked to the instauration of the penteteric Nikephoria after the victories against Prousias I of Bithynia in 183.⁵⁶ Thirdly, Eumenes II must have been at the time at his peak, as witnessed by the religious honours offered by the *koinon* of the Ionians.⁵⁷

Numerous objections can be raised against this line of argument. The first of these concerns the historical context. Certainly Eumenes II won a victory in 166 against the Gauls despite the absence of support from Rome. This victory was celebrated in the Attalid kingdom and in neighbouring cities. At Pergamon it was followed by the instauration of the penteteric *Herakleia kai Sôteria*.⁵⁸ However, during the war itself, the Roman Senate had refused to hear Eumenes II, claiming that it no longer received kings (while at the same time it welcomed Prousias II).⁵⁹ Immediately following the victory of Eumenes II against the Gauls, a *senatus-consultum* of Rome recognized the autonomy of Galatia.⁶⁰ The geopolitical context is thus very different from that of the end of the 180s, when the striking of Athena Nikephoros tetradrachms began. In this new context, could Eumenes II really allow himself to

strike a coinage that so openly exalted kingship and would constitute a real challenge to Rome? I find this improbable.

The other objection concerns the legend that appears on the tetradrachms of Eumenes II: it is a short legend – the royal title and name of the king – without the epithet Σωτήρ, which is attested epigraphically.⁶¹ And yet, in the same period, the coins of Antiochos IV bear a legend that becomes longer and longer, where adjectives accumulate, aligning the king with a god, Βασιλέως Ἀντιόχου Θεοῦ Ἐπιφανούς Νικηφόρου ([coin] of the King Antiochos Theos Epiphanes Nikephoros) (Fig. 12).⁶² Is it likely that in such a context Eumenes II should not add his epithet Σωτήρ on the coins that exalted his royal person?

Finally, the late dating is largely based on the idea that the striking of this coinage did not last for a long period;⁶³ however we have seen that we cannot reach any certainty on this point, in the current state of the body of evidence.

WHY NOT AN EARLIER DATING?

These different objections have led me to ask whether we could place the beginning of this coinage earlier in the reign, maybe even at its beginning in the years before the Antiochic War, or at least in the first half of the reign.⁶⁴

Firstly, from the beginning of his reign there was a close collaboration between Eumenes II and his brother Attalos. For instance, Attalos was sent as an ambassador to Rome in 193/2 to stoke up the enmity of the Romans toward Antiochos III.⁶⁵ Secondly, even if the interpretation of the reverse type as an allusion to the good relations between Eumenes II and his brother Attalos is convincing, given that this feature

⁵⁵ Westermarck 1981, 22; Nicolet-Pierre 1989, 203–204, 210–211; Mattingly 1993a, 83–84; Meadows 2013, 173–174.

⁵⁶ For further details, see Marcellesi 2012a, 121–122, 125–127.

⁵⁷ See OGIS 763 = Welles 1934, no. 52.

⁵⁸ Robert 1984; Wörrle 2000, 561–563.

⁵⁹ Pol. 30.19.

⁶⁰ Pol. 30.28, 30.30.6; Liv. 45.34.10; Per. 46; Will 1982, 291–202.

⁶¹ E.g. in a decree of Telmessos in Lykia, dated 184 BC (year 14 of the king Eumenes *Sôter*: Segre 1932, 446–452, I l. 1. Cf. Will 1982, 231; Thonemann 2013, 35–36).

⁶² SC II, nos. 1398–1400 (Antioch-on-the-Orontes, 168–164 BC).

⁶³ See a more qualified view in Nicolet-Pierre 1989, 208, 211.

⁶⁴ Marcellesi 2012a, 125; 2012b, 161.

⁶⁵ Liv. 35.23.10–11.

of the Attalid dynasty is regularly underlined by our sources,⁶⁶ this interpretation does not seem to account for the complexity of the type.⁶⁷ The reverse type aligns with the Pergamene mythological traditions: numerous documents show that the cult of the Kabeiroi was important in Pergamon.⁶⁸

My contention is that the tetradrachms of Eumenes II fit in better in the context of the first years of his reign: the young king is trying to assert his power by a personal coinage. He does so by referring to Pergamene traditions and by exalting the harmony within the Attalid family. At this time it still seemed possible that a Hellenistic king could carve a place for himself in the game of international relations, despite the rise in power of Rome, before the Treaty of Apamea which sealed the retreat of the Seleucids in 188, before the Battle of Pydna which saw the defeat of Perseus and led to the end of the Antigonid kingdom in 168, before the so-called "Day of Eleusis" that ended the ambitions of Antiochos IV in the same year.

A new interpretation

Comparison with contemporaneous coinages allows the throwing of a new light on the meaning of Eumenes II portrait tetradrachms.

COMPARISON WITH OTHER CONTEMPORANEOUS ROYAL COINAGES

These tetradrachms break away from traditional dynastic coinages. The same phenomenon is attested, at the same time, for the Antigonids and the Seleucids.

In the case of the Antigonids, from Antigonos Gonatas (277–239) to Antigonos Doson (229–221), the coins do not display the royal portrait, but only representations of gods. On the tetradrachms we primarily see two combinations of types, in some cases a Macedonian shield decorated with Pan's head as an *episemon* on the obverse, and Athena Alkidemos on the reverse, in others Zeus' or Poseidon's head on the obverse, and Apollo on the prow of a ship on the reverse. Philip V (221–179) departs from this tradition by having his portrait placed on the obverse, and Athena on the reverse (Fig. 9).⁶⁹



Fig. 11. Antiochos IV drachm: king's portrait (realistic) / Apollo on the omphalos. CGB Numismatique Paris (bgr 287673).

Perseus (179–168) followed him by adopting the eagle on a thunderbolt within an oak wreath on the reverse (Fig. 10).⁷⁰

In the Seleucid dynasty, it is Antiochos IV (175–164) who first breaks away from the tradition according to which, since Antiochos I, the portrait of the ruling sovereign was generally accompanied on the reverse by Apollo on the omphalos or, more rarely, by Apollo standing and resting on a tripod. Following some issues which conform to this well-established tradition (Fig. 11), he adopted on the reverse the type of Zeus Nikephoros (Fig. 12), which refers to Alexander and above all to Seleukos I; thus Antiochos IV legitimated his power although he had usurped it at the expense of the elder branch of the dynasty, by ousting his nephew Demetrios, the son of Seleukos IV. Moreover, as we have already pointed out, the legend is extended, assimilating Antiochos IV to Zeus Nikephoros.⁷¹

The later dating for the portrait tetradrachms of Eumenes II might suggest that the coins of Antiochos IV were a model for the Attalid king. This is a possibility, but in that case the fact that Eumenes chose a short monetary legend is surprising. In the hypothesis of an early dating for Eumenes II portrait tetradrachms, the coinage of Philip V would have served as a model. Following this, the coinage of Eumenes II, along with that of the kings of Macedonia, could have in its turn served as a model for Antiochos IV's coins. Yet Antiochos IV was supported by Eumenes II during his accession and stayed in Pergamon before reaching Antioch:⁷² he may well have been inspired by what he witnessed in Pergamon, and the way in which Eumenes II promoted royal power.

In any case, the end of the 3rd century and the first decades of the 2nd are marked by a renewed use of monetary images as a vector for royal ideology. By striking coinage with his likeness, Eumenes II shows his will to affirm his personal power.

⁶⁶ Pol. 18.41.10, 23.11, 32.8.6.

⁶⁷ Cf. the complexity and wealth of the Pergamene iconography in the matter of coinage (on the cistophoric coinage for example) as well as sculpture (the altar of Pergamon). On the altar of Pergamon, see now Queyrel 2005.

⁶⁸ Paus. 1.4.6; Ohlemutz 1940, 192–202; Queyrel 1999, 326–328; Marcellesi 2012a, 125.

⁶⁹ Gaebler 1935, 190.

⁷⁰ Gaebler 1935, 195–196.

⁷¹ The type of Zeus appears after 173 at Antioch (SC II, no. 1396) and the extended legend after 168 (SC II, no. 1398).

⁷² OGIS 248.



Fig. 12. Antiochos IV tetradrachm: king's portrait (idealized) / Zeus Nikephoros, extended legend. CGB Numismatique Paris (bgr 364630).

THE TETRADRACHMS WITH THE LEGEND

ΘΕΩΝ ΚΑΒΕΙΡΩΝ ΣΥΡΙΩΝ

The tetradrachms that present the same reverse type as the portrait tetradrachms of Eumenes II, with the legend Θεῶν Καβείρων Συρίων (Fig. 4), are generally attributed to the island of Syros, but A. Meadows recently proposed a Pergamon attribution, because they share their reverse with the portrait tetradrachms of Eumenes II. Such an attribution would change the context and meaning of Eumenes II portrait tetradrachms, and needs to be discussed.

Apart from the reverse type, Meadows bases this attribution on three arguments.⁷³ First, he questions the interpretation of Συρίων as an *ethnikon* and suggests it is an adjective referring to Θεῶν Καβείρων. The link between the Kabeiroi and the Thea Syria could explain, according to him, this designation. Also, the representation of Demeter on the obverse of the tetradrachms could refer to the goddess's cult in Pergamon, connected to that of the Great Mother. Finally, Syros is a small city and we can hardly imagine that it could have struck such an important coinage: 14 obverse dies are currently known for the tetradrachms in the name of the *Theoi Kabeiroi*; the original number of dies is around 24.5 and the total of the coins struck would be equal to about 320 talents of silver.

Meadows' hypothesis is interesting and even attractive but gives rise to numerous objections. As far as the legend is concerned, the interpretation proposed by Meadows needs substantiation from epigraphic documents, and yet the formula Θεῶν Καβείρων Συρίων is not attested elsewhere.⁷⁴ On the contrary, the pattern of the monetary legend composed of the name of the divinity inscribed vertically on both sides on the one hand and the *ethnikon* horizontally in the lower section on the other, is found on numerous series of Attic-weight

tetradrachms, in Thasos, Maronea, Alexandria Troas, Parion, Odessos,⁷⁵ and Klazomenai.⁷⁶

The iconography associating Demeter and the Kabeiroi is well suited to Syros: the cult of Demeter was very important there; coins from the imperial period show the Kabeiroi at the time of Commodus;⁷⁷ numerous issues of the imperial period bear the legend ΚΑΒΙ or Καβίρων next to the *ethnikon* (entire or abridged).⁷⁸

Finally we are ignorant about almost all the history of Syros in the Hellenistic period and the city is without doubt one of the so-called "small cities";⁷⁹ but many cities, even minor ones, struck series of coins which were substantial, at one time or another, and we cannot ascertain why. We can mention the case of the "wreathed" tetradrachms struck by numerous cities of Asia Minor: at Smyrna we count 13 known dies and an original number of dies at 14.2; at Herakleia under Latmos, 25 dies known and an original number of dies of 28.1.⁸⁰ I do not believe that we can dismiss the claim of a city such as Syros to the striking of such an important coinage. The coinage could be the fruit of a gift from an evergetes; it is in this manner that E. Le Quéré, in a recent book on the Cyclades in the imperial period explains certain issues from that period.⁸¹ In the context of the numerous wars of the beginning of the 2nd century (e.g. the Second Macedonian War, the Antiochic War, etc.), the Syros tetradrachms could represent the city's contribution towards a war effort.

I find it preferable to retain the Syros attribution and to reject Meadows' recent hypothesis.

THE TETRADRACHMS OF ATHENA NIKEPHOROS

The portrait tetradrachms of Eumenes II must finally be compared to other Attic-weight-standard tetradrachms, attributed with certainty to Pergamon: these are the tetradrachms of Athena Nikephoros, the great goddess of Pergamon.

These tetradrachms, attested also by three specimens,⁸² show on their obverse the head of Medusa on a shield, on the reverse Athena Nikephoros with the legend Ἀθηνᾶς Νικηφόρου

⁷³ Meadows 2013, 184–186. On the contrary, an attribution to Syros was suggested for the portrait tetradrachms of Eumenes II, but has not prevailed: cf. Westermark 1981, 19–20; Nicolet-Pierre 1989, 204 n. 7 (together with previous publications).

⁷⁴ Meadows 2013, 186.

⁷⁵ Gauthier 1975, 172–173 (=Gauthier 2011, 181–182), which does not mention Syros.

⁷⁶ Boulay 2009; Meadows 2009.

⁷⁷ RPC IV nos. 5278. Le Quéré 2015, 383 no. 93 and pl. IX.

⁷⁸ BMC Islands, Syros, 125–126 nos. 21–22, 24–25, 27; RPC II, 66 nos. 263–264; RPC IV nos. 4707–08, 4710, 6691; Le Quéré 2015, 380–383 nos. 81, 87–89, 91 and pl. IX.

⁷⁹ On "great" and "small" cities, cf. Savalli-Lestrade 2013.

⁸⁰ Cf. De Callataÿ 2013, 233, Table 6.10. For Syros, the numbers given by De Callataÿ (37.2 dies used at Syros, Carter method) are slightly different from those given by Meadows 2013, 186.

⁸¹ Le Quéré 2015, 93–95, 98–100.

⁸² One of these comes from the Ma'aret En-Nu'man hoard: Mattingly 1993a, 80, no. 467.

(Fig. 6). The Nikephoria were transformed into a Panhellenic festival by Eumenes II after his victory over Prousias I of Bithynia in 183. This important transformation is known from an epigraphic dossier made up of many recognitions of *asylia* by various states.⁸³ It also gave rise to the striking of tetradrachms whose instauration can be situated around 181, at the time of the celebration of the first penteteric Nikephoria.⁸⁴

With the tetradrachms of Athena Nikephoros, Eumenes II invented a new way of using monetary iconography. The iconography firstly celebrates one of Pergamon's important cults, secondly a celebration that became Panhellenic, and thirdly the victories of the king himself, albeit in an indirect and allusive manner. As on the cistophoric coins, the royal persona is not foregrounded, contrary to what happens on Eumenes II portrait tetradrachms.

PERGAMON AND ILION

At approximately the same period, in the 180s, following the chronology recently proposed by D. Knoepfler and based on his hypothesis concerning the organization of the Confederation of Athena Ilias,⁸⁵ the coinage in the name of Athena Ilias began to be struck in the Troad (Fig. 7). On the obverse, it bears the head of the goddess, and on the reverse the statue of Athena Ilias with the legend Αθηνᾶς Πλάδος. There is an iconographic relation between the series of Athena Ilias and the series of Athena Nikephoros, two series that do not display the leaf wreath on the reverse.

We can ask ourselves, given that the dates seem to be close and the two coinages celebrate, both by their reverses and their legends, two important cults of Athena in the area, whether one of the series was not the model for the other. In a recent doctoral thesis, W. Pillot has shown that the city of Ilion regularly claimed the heritage of the Trojan War as its own and, following the Treaty of Apamea, a form of kinship with Rome through the myth of Aeneas the Trojan.⁸⁶ This very stimulating hypothesis makes us wonder whether the coins of the Confederation of Athena Ilias, if indeed their striking did commence in the 180s, should not be viewed in the context of rivalry with the tetradrachms of Athena Nikephoros: whichever of these two coinages was inaugurated first, Ilion and Pergamon may each have tried to lay claim to the Trojan heri-

tage – and thus a relationship with Rome – in the same way as in the imperial times the cities of Asia zealously competed for the Emperor's favour.⁸⁷ The very name Pergamon could be read as a claim to Trojan legacy: on 4th-century coins, the Athena type on the reverse is close to representations of the Palladion,⁸⁸ the statue of Athena which Aeneas carried away with him as he fled Troy.

Such an interpretation invites us to return to the portrait tetradrachms of Eumenes II. The type of the Kabeiroi refers to the Pergamene cults but may also be interpreted as an attempt to connect with Rome. In fact the Kabeiroi are assimilated with the Kouretes and Korybantes, who were the attendants of Rhea, and the Oriental Great Mother, Cybele, had been assimilated with Rhea. In 205, the Romans sent a mission to Pessinous to seek the black stone, the incarnation of the Great Mother / Cybele and to introduce the cult to Rome. This episode happened just a few years earlier than the accession of Eumenes II; the memory of this was undoubtedly present, even more so because the Attalids played the role of intermediary between Rome and Pessinous.⁸⁹ As mentioned earlier, Rome had not yet reached its apex in the East – this came with its victory over Antiochos III and the Treaty of Apamea – but it had already vanquished Philip V in 198, and in 196 Flamininus officially proclaimed the freedom of the Greek cities,⁹⁰ an ominous warning for the kings. Maybe Eumenes II, while affirming his personal power through his portrait coinage, was attempting to emphasize a Pergamene cult which could relate Pergamon to Rome.

Conclusion: The relation between Eumenes II and Rome as exemplified by coinage

To conclude, the portrait tetradrachms of Eumenes II depart from the Attalid tradition: they illustrate the king's interest in coinage and his will to use monetary iconography as a vector for royal ideology. Although a date at the end of the reign has generally been preferred, I have shown that a date in the first half of the reign, and even at its beginning cannot be ruled out. This historical context seems to provide a better explanation for this unusual coinage.

⁸³ Rigsby 1986, 363–377.

⁸⁴ Le Rider 1973 (=Le Rider 1999, vol. 2, 641–654). Silver fractions and bronze coins were struck with the same legend (Marcellesi 2012a, 121–122, 127–128, 186–187 nos. 50, 53–57); a date after 133 was recently suggested by Chameroy 2012, 147–156 for the bronze coins (cf. Nollé 2014, 308–309), but his argumentation is very questionable and I find it preferable to place the beginning of these bronze coins under the Attalids. For further details, cf. Marcellesi 2016.

⁸⁵ Knoepfler 2010, 47–60.

⁸⁶ Pillot 2013; 2016, 133–135, 169.

⁸⁷ The coinage in the name of Athena Ilias was struck by the Confederation of the goddess (cf. Robert 1966, Knoepfler 2010, 47–60), but the city's role was paramount in the Confederation and the city may have used this coinage as propaganda tool for the Confederation as well as for its own interests.

⁸⁸ Marcellesi 2012a, 58.

⁸⁹ Liv. 29.10–11, 29.14; Paillet 1997, 138–145.

⁹⁰ Pol. 18.44.2, 18.45.9, 18.46.5.

As to relations with Rome, the Attalids differed from the other Hellenistic royal dynasties. While they ruled a kingdom which was still relatively small at the end of the 3rd century and the beginning of the 2nd century, Attalos I and then Eumenes II decided to take a gamble on a Roman alliance, in the hope that this would help them against their powerful neighbours, namely the Antigonids and the Seleucids, as the Macedonian Wars and the Antiochic War were being waged. The Eumenes II portrait tetradrachms are a perfect illustration of this original positioning.

While trying to affirm his personal power in an impressive manner at a time when this was still possible, the young king took care not to defy Rome too much and chose as the reverse type the Kabeiroi, which could be seen as affirming a relation with the new power. After this, the new coins that were struck, be it the tetradrachms of Athena Nikephoros or the cistophoric coinage, were characterized by an effacement of the royal person behind the myths exalting the Pergamene tradition. The coinages inaugurated by Eumenes II thus show at the same time how the monetary tool is used as a vector for royal ideology, but also evidence his political genius – a mix of caution and diplomatic finesse when faced with the implacable rise of Rome's power.

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