



BRILL

Thoughts on the Iconography of the Sophytos Coinage

Stefan Härtel

Freie Universität Berlin, Berlin, Germany

stefan.haertel@fu-berlin.de

Published online 11 March 2024

Abstract

The iconography of the coinage issued by Sophytos in early Hellenistic Bactria is analysed. It has long been recognised that the iconography involving a cockerel, winged cheek-guards and an “open 8” caduceus suggests the invocation of the Greek god Hermes. Taking into account the Iranian context of the coinage, the possibility is analysed that the coinage testifies an identification of Hermes with Sraoša. While the evidence is wanting, such an *interpretatio* seems well possible. Independent of this, the coinage is put into context with the mention of a cockerel used as a field ensign in the Achaemenid period by Plutarch. It suggests that rather than interpret Sophytos as a “rebel” against Macedonian rule in Bactria, he should be considered a governor who derived his legitimacy from an imperial Achaemenid or Macedonian office.

Keywords

Sophytos – Bactria – Hellenism – Sraoša – Hermes

Introduction

Of the many mysterious artefacts of the early history of the Hellenistic Far East, the so-called Sophytos coins are undoubtedly among the most tantalising. A relatively small amount of coins of Greek denominations and Indo-Achaemenid

weight standard was issued in the name of a certain Sophytos.¹ Many coins are unprovenanced. Some emerged in markets of the Punjāb, although some sources claim they were found as far as the Oxus basin in the territory of ancient Bactria,² where the coinage by all indications originates.³ A hoard from Aqtcha near Balkh definitively locates this coinage in Bactria.⁴

The coin designs and standards point to an issue in the early Hellenistic period, probably in the late 4th or early 3rd century BCE.⁵ This would open the attractive and often considered possibility that Sophytos is identical to a local ruler encountered by Alexander the Great early in his Indian campaign known to Diodor (xvii, 91, 7) as Σωπειθης, to Quintus Curtius Rufus (ix, 1, 27) as Sophites, and to Arrian (vi, 2, 2) and Strabo (xv, 1, 30) as Σωπειθος. His kingdom is located by Strabo around the Akeshines river (Chenab). He quickly surrendered to Alexander and was left by the invader to keep his kingdom. He is not mentioned again in the sources, and his identity with the issuer of the Sophytos coinage is a mere guess.⁶ Interpretations of the coinage range from an issue to pay Macedonian soldiers to the manifestation of a rebellious reign in Bactria some time between the death of Alexander and the re-conquest of Bactria by Seleukos Nikator.⁷

Equally problematic is the nature of the iconography found on the coins. Sophytos apparently issued anonymous coins with an imitation of the iconography of Athenian 'owls' but with different legends.⁸ There are also series in which the owl of Athena on the reverse is replaced by an eagle and such with the head of Zeus on the obverse and an eagle on the reverse. The coins that are of concern here however identify the issuer by the legend ΣΟΦΥΤΟΥ with a helmeted male head on the obverse and a cockerel on the reverse. Some coins with such reverse types show the head of Athena on the obverse. The coins

-
- 1 The coinage has recently been studied with a much broader material basis than previously by Bordeaux 2021 and Jansari 2018, with the key aspects and results of the latter repeated in Jansari 2021.
 - 2 cf. the references in Bopearachchi 2015 (1996), 8–9 w. fn. 11, also Jansari 2018, 72 and 87.
 - 3 Bopearachchi 2015 (1996), 9; Bordeaux 2021, 79 and 95.
 - 4 Bopearachchi 2015 (2005), 69–74.
 - 5 cf. the arguments presented in Bopearachchi 2015 (1996), 11–13 and Bordeaux 2021, 95–97.
 - 6 Consequently, the identification has never been undisputed, cf. the references in Bopearachchi 2015 (1996), 5. The name appears again in a Greek inscription from the early Hellenistic period found in Kandahar. The Sophytos of this inscription was a merchant, but a possible relation to the Sophytos of the coins has been discussed. For a detailed assessment and contextualisation of the inscription cf. Mairs 2014, 102–45.
 - 7 On the various interpretations cf. Coloru 2009, 139–42; Plischke 2014, 176–78 and Engels 2017, 140–43.
 - 8 These should not be confused with actual imitations of 'owls' from Bactria, cf. Bopearachchi 2015 (2005), 69.

have control marks with the letters M, MN, MNA and a caduceus symbol in the shape of an 8 open at the top.⁹ The associations of Athena and the owl are clear. The appearance of the eagle as an attribute of Zeus together with Athena may come as a surprise, but does not pose a problem. The cockerel and the helmeted male head are more mysterious and have received numerous interpretations. In general, these include an association with Hermes or a Bactrian-Iranian tradition of which a mystery is made.¹⁰ A connection with the Indian Skanda cult has also been repeatedly suggested.¹¹

While hesitant to add more material to this vexed question, I believe that a different angle should be explored to interpret this iconography. Since the coinage seems to originate in Bactria,¹² it would only be consequential to consider an Iranian perspective in its explanation. In the following, I propose to test the possibility that the Sophytos coinage is influenced by religious conceptions involving the Zoroastrian god Sraoša.¹³ It will be suggested that this angle may help make sense of the iconography and its intention, and may even help provide some possible context for who Sophytos was and how he interacted with the Hellenistic rulers of his time.

Sophytos and Iran

The principal objection against the assumption of a culturally Iranian connection would be that coinage issued in Bactria under the Seleukids and the Graeco-Bactrian is otherwise devoid of any easily recognisable Iranian iconography. The prevalence of Greek imagery in this region even in the religious sphere is such that Bactrian and Zoroastrian deities receive a distinctly Greek iconography even if they are explicitly identified as non-Greek. A case in point for the early Hellenistic period is the famous votive statuette of the god Oxos from Takht-i Sangin that takes the shape of the Greek river god Marsyas.¹⁴ This fundamental Greek iconographic influence is still felt on the depiction of some gods on coins of the Kušan period, although by this time, Iranian, Indian and

9 For a detailed description of the known coin types cf. Boppearachchi 2015 (1996), 7–9; Jansari 2018, 72–81.

10 Plischke 2014, 177 (also Olbrycht 2016, 719).

11 Coloru 2009, 140; Engels 2017, 141; Jansari 2018, 78 and 2021, 492–93.

12 See above, fn. 3.

13 Sraoša is mentioned in passing in the discussion of Jansari 2018, 78, but the possibility of a connection is not seriously considered here. On the other hand, Alam 2015, 133 briefly considers the Iranian connection of the cockerel by way of Sraoša and concludes that Hellenistic and Iranian imagery are brought into a “subtlen Dialog”.

14 Shenkar 2014, 128–29.

Roman elements are far more numerous.¹⁵ On the coins of the Graeco-Bactrian monarchs however, the deities depicted on coins are Greek both in name and appearance, and if native elements begin appearing on the coinage of the Hellenistic Far East, they seem to be of Buddhist and Indian rather than Iranian origin, with some possible exceptions in the case of Mithraic imagery.¹⁶

This is a serious difficulty, but it should be considered that the Sophytos coinage is in every way exceptional. It does not represent the origin of a tradition and may therefore include features that were later abandoned or outright rejected.¹⁷ This may include the direct or indirect representation of local elements or deities. The inspiration for such a representation may stem from Athenian coinage that was known to and imitated by Sophytos, and featured an anthropomorphic head of Athena on the obverse and the owl as an attribute on the reverse. While such an interpretation can at present only be hypothetical, it is worth considering what evidence there may be for an Iranian element in this coinage.

Hermes

If there is one deity present on the “male head” types of Sophytos, it appears to be Hermes. This is the case at the very least due to the caduceus symbol on the reverses.¹⁸ Jansari argues that this is most likely a control mark and part of the original die engraving.¹⁹ It is always present on the die reverses with the cockerel, even on coins with Athena on the obverse. It would not be a stretch to assume based on this that Sophytos chose to present Hermes as his tutelary deity, although one would have to argue the caduceus symbol on the Athena type coins is not connected to this goddess, thus both Athena and Hermes being present on these coins. This is however unlikely, because the particular

15 The Roman influence on Kušān coins was studied by Göbl 1960, cf. also an extensive discussion in my dissertation (Härtel, forthcoming).

16 The possibility of Mithraic imagery on Graeco-Bactrian coins is discussed affirmatively by Boyce/Grenet 1991, 163–65 and more critically by Shenkar 2014, 106. Iranian religiosity is far more visible archaeologically. A survey of material that is still useful can be found in Boyce/Grenet 1991, 165–92.

17 Jansari 2018, 75 rejects the idea that the Sophytos coinage served as an inspiration for the coinage of Seleukos I and instead suggests that the similarities are due to both coinages being “broadly contemporary”. Bopearachchi 2015 (1996), 11–12 on the other hand provides some important arguments for the fact that the Seleukos coinage influenced that of Sophytos, which by all indications seems to be the most likely scenario.

18 Coloru 2009, 141; Engels 2017, 142; There is however some scepticism towards this, cf. Martinez-Sève 2010, 5.

19 Jansari 2021, 492–93.

form of the caduceus found on the Sophytos coins in shape of an open ‘8’ is an attribute specifically of Hermes.²⁰ The association with Hermes may find further emphasis by way of the wing on the cheek guard of the helmet on the obverses.²¹

There does not appear to be a particularly strong association of Hermes with the cockerel, although it is an occasional attribute.²² If its role as such an attribute is emphasised on the Sophytos coinage, and it is indeed intended to represent Hermes here, a possible explanation would be that this particular attribute was chosen to point out Hermes’ identity with a local deity who was commonly associated with the cockerel.

Sraoša

In Zoroastrian imagery, the cockerel was associated with Sraoša.²³ While iconographic material is wanting, this association clearly emerges from the Pahlavi Vidēvdād 18.22–27:

*ēg hān murw wāng *barēd (bld) abar pad oš ī abzār [ī pad nēm-šab ul āyēd]*

then that bird crows over the powerful dawn [which comes up at midnight].²⁴

It is reaffirmed in Pahlavi literature by the Greater Bundahišn (xxiv.48):

*xrōs pad hamēstārih ī dēwān ud jādūgān dād estēd, abāg sag hamkār. cīyōn gōwēd pad dēn kū az gētīg dāmān hān pad druz-zadārih abāg Srōš *hamkār hēnd, sag ud xrōs.*

The cock is created to oppose the demons and sorcerers, as a collaborator of the dog. As He says in the Religion: among the material creatures, those are the collaborators of Srōš, the dog and the cock.²⁵

20 R. Hurschmann, “Stab, Stock, Knüppel”, in: Der Neue Pauly, Herausgegeben von: Hubert Cancik, Helmuth Schneider (Antike), Manfred Landfester (Rezeptions- und Wissenschaftsgeschichte). Consulted online on 17 August 2021 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1574-9347_dnp_e1120420>.

21 So seen by Jansari 2018, 77.

22 Chandezon 2021, 79, fn. 61.

23 Kreyenbroek 1985, 118; Shenkar 2014, 145–46.

24 Text and translation from Kreyenbroek 1985, 118, fn. 38.

25 Text and translation from Kreyenbroek 1985, 118.

The Jawišt ī Friyān (II.25) puts even greater emphasis on the association:

*cē hān xrōs xwānēnd *murwag ī Srōšahlāy ud ka wāng kunēd, ā-š petyārag
az dām ī Ohrmazd abāz dārēd.*

for that cock they call the bird of righteous Srōš. And when it crows, it keeps misfortune away from the creation of Ohrmazd.²⁶

An Iranian recipient would thus likely have seen the coinage of Sophytos as referring to Sraoša as the issuers tutelary deity. With the combination of iconography pertaining to Hermes, this would raise the question if an identification of Sraoša and Hermes is a possibility.

There is no positive evidence for an *interpretatio Graeca* of Sraoša as Hermes or vice versa an *interpretatio Iranica* of Hermes as Sraoša. However, what little evidence there is for Hermes in the Iranian world indicates that there does not seem to have been a canonical identification of Hermes with any one Iranian god. In Kommagene, Hermes was associated with Miθra together with Apollo and Hēlios.²⁷ On Kušān coinage, the god closest to Hermes in iconography is Pharro, although his attributes seem to have rather been borrowed from Roman Mercurius.²⁸

With the apparent lack of any clear correspondence in the mind of ancient recipients, it should not be surprising that especially in such an early phase of Greek-Iranian religious contacts in the east, the identification of Greek and Iranian deities may have been inconsistent. Hermes worship did continue to exist in Hellenistic Central Asia, but the popularity seems to have faded relatively early.²⁹ It is thus impossible to say with certainty what Iranian or Zoroastrian god Hermes would have been with identified by locals, or if such an identification even took place at all.

Sraoša is a god of relatively extensive function in Zoroastrianism. He has a strong martial aspect, but his primary role is that of a guardian and protector against evil, an overseer of orthopraxy and a mediator between the earthly and

26 Text and translation from Kreyenbroek 1985, 118.

27 cf. the Cult Law of Antiochos I, l. 54–55 (Waldmann 1973, 64 for the text).

28 This is evident from the purse used by Pharro, which is an attribute of Mercurius but not Hermes, cf. C. Robert Phillips III., Mercurius D. Ikonographie. In: Der Neue Pauly, Herausgegeben von: Hubert Cancik, Helmuth Schneider (Antike), Manfred Landfester (Rezeptions- und Wissenschaftsgeschichte). Consulted online on 17 August 2021 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1574-9347_dnp_e800040>. On the iconography in general cf. Carter 1986.

29 cf. Stančo 2012, 158: “Hermes in the east did not even live to see the height of Kushan power”.

divine sphere.³⁰ His name derives from Old Avestan *səraoša-* “hearkening”,³¹ thus also being the figure that receives the obedience of followers to divine commands.³² In later Persian tradition of the Islamic period, he becomes an angel Sorūš and as such appears as the messenger of God in Ferdowsī’s *Šāhnāme*.³³

The resemblance of Sraoša’s role with that of Hermes especially in the function as mediator and messenger is evident, and an identification of the two deities is to be expected. The greatest caveat is that very little is known of Sraoša’s cult and popularity in the Achaemenid and early post-Achaemenid era.³⁴ How much the Avestan information on Sraoša reflects how the god was seen in Bactria in the early Hellenistic period is currently unknowable. The only statement that can be made with certainty is that his cult existed in Bactria in the Kušān period, as the Rabatak Inscription proves, and it is likely that the cult was of significant age there, if it is permissible to take other archaisms in the Rabatak Inscriptions as evidence.³⁵

Skanda

In Indian iconography, the cockerel becomes linked to the deities of the Skanda cult.³⁶ For this reason, several scholars suggest to see the depiction of the cockerel in relation to Skanda.³⁷ Jansari 2021 argues that it “may represent one of the deities who was later assimilated into Skanda’s cult”.³⁸ Such a deity

30 The roles of Sraoša are summarised by Kreyenbroek 1985, 168–75 based on the preceding study. His role as mediator between earthly and divine spheres is discussed *ibid.*, 129–30.

31 Kreyenbroek 1985, 7–8.

32 Kreyenbroek 1985, 19.

33 Kreyenbroek 1985, 130, although it is pointed out that the “messenger” aspect of Sraoša is explicit only in *Dk M.*, 313.20 ff. Another messenger figure is *Naiiriō.sarjha*, who however seems to have been eclipsed in popularity by Sraoša (Kreyenbroek 1985, 183) and was in any case closely tied to him (cf. Kreyenbroek 1985, 176). Line 10 of the Rabatak Inscription mentions them in the same group of deities (as ΣΡΟΡΑΡΔΟ and ΝΑΡΑΣΑΟ) and states that cult statues of both gods were set up in the sanctuary, although there is no indication at what the statue of ΝΑΡΑΣΑΟ looked like, as there is otherwise no hint towards an iconography.

34 Kreyenbroek 1985, 178–79.

35 Most notably the archaic form of the divine name ΑΟΡΟΜΟΖΔΟ compared to the more common ΩΡΟΜΟΖΔΟ found on coins of Huviška. This issue is discussed in more detail in Härtel, forthcoming.

36 Banerjea 1974², 364; Mann 2012, 124–25.

37 Coloru 2009, 140; Engels 2017, 141; Jansari 2018, 78 and 2021, 492–93.

38 Jansari 2021, 492.

may very well be Sraoša. The martial aspect and the iconography involving the cockerel is common to both. The strongest evidence comes from the Rabatak Inscription from the time of the Kušān emperor Kaniška I.³⁹ Here, Bactrian ΣΡΟΦΑΡΔΟ seems to be explicitly identified with the two “Indian” gods ΜΑΑΣΗΝΟ and ΒΙΖΑΓΟ (Mahāsena and Viśakha), who appear as two individual gods together with ΣΚΑΝΔΟ ΚΟΜΑΡΟ (Skanda-Kumāra) on coins of Kaniška’s successor Huviška.⁴⁰ Sraoša on the other hand does not appear on any known Kušān coins.

Mann 2012 argues that the cockerel attribute of Skanda is likely due to Iranian influence, although his suggestion that it is a Parthian interpretation of the *vār̥ḡna* bird does not hold up.⁴¹ The most likely explanation is rather a Bactrian influence,⁴² as the earliest depictions of Skanda with the cockerel come from the Kušān period.⁴³ With this in mind, it seems the most likely that the cockerel as a divine attribute on the Sophytos coinage would belong to an Iranian tradition that later influenced Indian ideas, and that this tradition is that of Sraoša. Obviously, the fact that the Kušān depictions of Skanda post-date the Sophytos coinage by four centuries or more should inspire caution and any number of now invisible links in other directions may have existed.

The Cockerel as an Achaemenid Insignia?

If the Sophytos coinage is to be understood as emerging from a local context, it is likely that it displays Hermes as an *intepretatio* of Sraoša, not vice versa. The motivation to depict an Iranian god using Greek iconographic elements is likely to be sought in the early Hellenistic *zeitgeist* and should warn against seeing Sophytos as a ‘rebel’ against Alexander or the Seleukids. There may however be a particular motivation behind the use of Sraoša-Hermes as the tutelary deity of Sophytos. In his vita of Artaxerxes II, Plutarch narrates that at the Battle of Kunaxa, Cyrus the Younger was killed by a Carian spearman. He continues:

39 Line 10 with the gloss between lines 9 and 10; cf. Sims-Williams 2008, 64.

40 These aspects are discussed in detail in Härtel, forthcoming.

41 Mann 2012, 125. This interpretation conflates the depiction of a cockerel and the *vār̥ḡna* bird, not respecting the fact that the *vār̥ḡna* bird tends to take the shape of a bird of prey and such a depiction, clearly not a cockerel, is found on the ΙΑΜΡΟ coin of Huviška, cf. also Shenkar 2014, 132, 167 and 176.

42 The question why Mahāsena and the gods of the Skanda cult appear on Kušān coinage whereas Sraoša does not is discussed in Härtel, forthcoming.

43 Srinivasan 1997/98, 252.

περὶ αὐτόν, πίπτει δὲ ὁ Κύρος (...) Καρὸς ἀνθρώπου πατάξαντος, ᾧ γέρας ἔδωκε τῆς πράξεως ταύτης ὁ βασιλεὺς ἀλεκτρυόνα χρυσοῦν ἐπὶ δόρατος αἰεὶ πρὸ τῆς τάξεως ἐν ταῖς στρατείαις κομίζειν: καὶ γὰρ αὐτοὺς τοὺς Κάρας ἀλεκτρυόνας οἱ Πέρσαι διὰ τοὺς λόφους, οἷς κοσμοῦσι τὰ κράνη, προσηγόρευον.

Thus Cyrus fell (...) from the blow of a Carian, who was rewarded by the king for this exploit with the privilege of always carrying a golden cock upon his spear in front of the line during an expedition; for the Persians call the Carians themselves cocks, because of the crests with which they adorn their helmets.⁴⁴

The explanation of this nickname given by Plutarch or his source (Deinon, according to 10,1) is hardly convincing, as it would require the Carians adopting a nickname given to them by the Persians. Furthermore, the connection of Carians with the cockerel is otherwise unknown.⁴⁵ It is more likely that Plutarch-Deinon was oblivious to the meaning of the cockerel as a field ensign and found an explanation of his own.

There is no further evidence for the use of a cockerel as an ensign in the Achaemenid army, but there is very little source material for such things in general. A stamp seal showing a cockerel belonging to an Ah-iddina-Marduk, governor of the people of Susa in Elam is known from the second half of the 5th century BCE,⁴⁶ fitting in this time frame and suggesting the use of the cockerel as an insignia. The seal-bearer was clearly a high-ranking individual, but whether these two cases are related in any way is impossible to know.⁴⁷

Olbrycht 2016 has also pointed out a passage from Aristophanes' Ὀρνιθες in which a cockerel is referred to as governing the Persians, thus a "symbol of the king of Persia and indeed of Persia itself" and called the "Persian bird".⁴⁸ This may be interesting to view with regards to the aforementioned cockerel symbolism found in Plutarch and provides further evidence for the cockerel as an imperial Achaemenid insignia.

44 Plutarch, Artoxerxes 10,3. Text and translation from the 1926 Loeb edition by B. Perrin.

45 On these points cf. Binder 2008, 200–01, suggesting a Zoroastrian explanation for the cockerel but not mentioning Sraoša.

46 <http://www.achemenet.com/en/item/?/achaemenid-museum/object-categories/seals/2563868> Retrieved 03.06.2021, 13:00.

47 However, it seems as though members of the Achaemenid elite commonly bore seals depicting "royal" animals such as bulls, gryphons and the like, which are also seen slain by the Achaemenid emperor in Persepolis reliefs.

48 *Op. cit.*, 719; cf. also Chandezon 2021, 75–77.

It is unknown if this relates in any way to the Sophytos coinage. It is plausible to regard Sraoša in his martial aspect as a protective deity of later Achaemenid armies and his attribute as being used as an ensign. It is equally possible that Sophytos was a general or high-ranking official and received the privilege of carrying a cockerel from the emperor, Achaemenid or Macedonian, similar to the unnamed Carian, and that he decided to use such a privilege as his emblem. In this context, it may even be considered that Sophytos was not of Bactrian origin himself, but an official from another province of the empire who found the opportunity to rise to power in Bactria during the confused situation after Alexander's death. At the very least, this would make any forced association with the Indian rulers from the histories of Alexander unnecessary.

Sophytos as Sraoša-Hermes?

A final point to be addressed here is the question of the nature of the obverse portrait and its relation to the possible iconography of Sraoša-Hermes. Most observers consider the obverse a portrait of Sophytos. Jansari disputes this and suggests that it may be a representation of Hermes and Skanda.⁴⁹ In regards to the above discussion, this suggestion would be emended here that it would represent Hermes-Sraoša.

It should be regarded a possibility that both may be the case. The coinage of Alexander the Great shows the king identified as Zeus-Ammon and Herakles. The same may be the case here, Sophytos being presented as an epiphany of Hermes-Sraoša. There is no reason to believe that the helmeted head could not have been modelled on the features of Sophytos, although they were likely idealised. The head takes the place of Athena on Attic imitation coins linked to Sophytos. On some coins, the bust of Athena appears on the obverse, the cockerel with the caduceus and ΣΩΦΥΤΟΥ legend on the reverse.

Such an appearance as a divine epiphany would on the one hand underscore the role Sophytos intended to play towards the recipients of the coinage as taking the duties of Sraoša-Hermes, but on the other hand express a distinction towards the reigning overlord, be it Alexander or Seleukos. The role of Sraoša-Hermes could be seen as an amendment to that of the overlord as a divine epiphany, not as a challenge. This would once more speak against interpreting Sophytos as a 'rebel'. There remains of course the question of how Seleukos I would have reacted to Sophytos and his issuing of coins. Even if Sophytos did not mean to challenge Seleukos, it cannot be denied that the coin

49 Jansari 2018, 76–77; Jansari 2021, 490.

issues of Sophytos represent him as the local authority, not Seleukos. Whatever the exact nature of relations and course of events, there is no denying that once Seleukid authority was firmly established over Bactria, only imperial Seleukid coins were issued there.

Conclusion

The Sophytos coinage with the cockerel seems to evoke the Zoroastrian god Sraoša employing the iconography of the Greek god Hermes. The identity of the two gods in the minds of ancient Greeks and Bactrians is likely given the similar roles both gods shared. There are only very few indicators of Iranian religious practice in Bactria before the Kušān period, so there is no evidence how popular Sraoša was or how deeply rooted in the local populace his cult would have been. Most likely it was an elitist cult and Sophytos would have wanted to address a very particular audience with these coins, although who precisely is regrettably unknown. However, it seems to show that the iconography of Sraoša with the cockerel was already extracted at such an early date from the Avestan tradition, which makes it all the more likely that the iconography of Skanda with the cockerel would have been influenced by the Sraoša cult. If so, the audience of the coins may have consisted both of Greek settlers and soldiers who would have found the very Greek nature of the coinage appealing, and Bactrian élites who would have felt represented by the references to Sraoša.

It is a possibility that Sophytos' use of the cockerel may have been influenced by its use as a military emblem in the Achaemenid Empire. It is also possible that Sophytos presented himself as an epiphany of Sraoša-Hermes. While this would clearly be a representation of privilege and a high degree of autonomy, these elements suggest that Sophytos wanted to step beside the reigning overlord rather than replace him. It is therefore not warranted to interpret Sophytos as a rebel against Macedonian suzerainty, but rather advisable to see him as an agent who would appear as a local or native face of the empire to the audience of the coins.

Acknowledgements

I am greatly indebted to Olivier Bordeaux and Michael Shenkar for discussing the topics of this paper with me and providing much constructive criticism which I hope to have adequately incorporated here. Needless to say

all remaining errors are my own. I also thank Michael Alram for kindly providing important literature.

Literature

- M. Alram, *Der Beginn der Münzprägung in Baktrien und Indien. Geldgeschichtliche Nachrichten* 50 (2015), 130–35.
- J.N. Banerjea, *The Development of Hindu Iconography*. New Delhi 1974³.
- C. Binder, *Plutarchs Vita des Artaxerxes. Ein historischer Kommentar*. Berlin/New York 2008.
- O. Bopearachchi, *Sophytes, the Enigmatic Ruler of Central Asia*. In: Idem, *From Bactria to Taprobane. Selected Works of Osmund Bopearachchi. Volume 1: Central Asian and Indian Numismatics*. New Delhi 2015, 3–16 (reprinted from *Nomismatika Khronika* 15 (1996), 19–32).
- O. Bopearachchi, *Greek Realms in Afghanistan: New Data*. In: Idem, *From Bactria to Taprobane. Selected Works of Osmund Bopearachchi. Volume 1: Central Asian and Indian Numismatics*. New Delhi 2015, 60–81 (reprinted from *Actes d'une journée d'étude*, UNESCO, 11 March 2005, 49–69).
- O. Bordeaux, *Sôphytos et Andragoras. Deux cas de monnayages autonomistes entre Bactriane et Parthie séleucides*. *Monuments et mémoires de la Fondation Eugène Piot* 122 (2021), 77–154.
- M. Boyce, F. Grenet, *A History of Zoroastrianism Volume Three. Zoroastrianism under Macedonian and Roman Rule. With a contribution by Roger Beck*. Leiden et al 1991.
- Chr. Chandezon, *Le coq et la poule en Grèce ancienne: Mutations d'un rapport de domestication*. *Revue Archéologique* 71 (2021), 69–104.
- O. Coloru, *Da Alessandro a Menandro. Il Regno Greco di Battriana*. Pisa/Roma 2009.
- D. Engels, *Benefactors, Kings, Rulers. Studies on the Seleukid Empire between East and West*. Leuven et al 2017.
- S. Härtel, *Commentary, Contextualisation and Interpretation of the Kušān Bactrian Inscriptions*. Forthcoming.
- S. Jansari, *The Sophytes coins. From the Punjab to Bactria and back again*. *Numismatic Chronicle* 178 (2018), 71–98, pl. 7–12.
- S. Jansari, *Two Sides of the Coin. From Sophytes to Skanda-Kārtikkeya*. In: R. Mairs (ed.), *The Graeco-Bactrian and Indo-Greek World*. London/New York 2021, 486–97.
- G. Kreyenbroek, *Sraoša in the Zoroastrian Tradition*. Leiden 1985.
- R. Mairs, *The Hellenistic Far East. Archaeology, Language, and Identity in Greek Central Asia*. Oakland 2014.
- R.D. Mann, *The Rise of Mahāsena. The Transformation of Skanda-Kārtikkeya in North India from the Kušāṇa to Gupta Empires*. Leiden/Boston 2012.

- L. Martinez-Sève, Pouvoir et religion dans la Bactriane hellénistique. Recherches sur la politique religieuse des rois séleucides et gréco-bactriens. *Chiron* 40 (2010), 1–27.
- M.J. Olbrycht, Review of Plischke 2014, *Gnomon* 88 (2016), 716–20.
- S. Plischke, Die Seleukiden und Iran. Die seleukidische Herrschaftspolitik in den östlichen Satrapien. Wiesbaden 2014.
- M. Shenkar, Intangible Spirits and Graven Images. The Iconography of Deities in the Pre-Islamic Iranian World. Leiden/Boston 2014.
- N. Sims-Williams, The Bactrian Inscription of Rabatak: A New Reading. *Bulletin of the Asia Institute* 18 (2004 [2008]), 53–68.
- D.M. Srinivasan, Skanda/Kārttikeya in the Early Art of the Northwest. *Silk Road Art and Archaeology* 5 (1997/98), 233–264.
- L. Stančo, Greek Gods in the East. Hellenistic Iconographic Schemes in Central Asia. Prague 2012.
- H. Waldmann, Die Kommagenischen Kultreformen unter König Mithradates I. Kalinikos und seinem Sohne Antiochos I. Leiden 1973.