

IRANIAN IDENTITY AND SELEUKID ALLEGIANCE: VAHBARZ, THE FRATARAKA AND EARLY ARSAKID COINAGE

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I. The evidence

The reign of the Frataraka is a chapter in the history of Persia that is often overlooked, though in many ways it constitutes the missing link that joins the Achaemenid and the Arsakid empires and provides an important clue for our understanding of the early Seleukids' policies towards their Iranian subjects. Indeed, although the Seleukid intention of creating royal legitimacy through continuity with the Achaemenid and the pre-Achaemenid past has become obvious everywhere in modern research, very little is known about how the early Seleukids acted in Persia itself. Furthermore, the age-old topos of Graeco-Persian antagonism has tempted nearly all scholars to interpret what few sources remain from the age of the Frataraka as evidence for anti-Seleukid behaviour. In a recent study, I tried to contest this view and showed that the same sources can also be analysed as witnesses for a loyalist attitude of the Persian dynasty towards their Seleukid overlords,¹ but it is useful to reconsider the main arguments pertaining to the rule of the dynast Vahbarz, since he is generally presented as a key figure in the 'conflictual' model of Frataraka rule and is supposed to have reigned in the middle of the 3rd century – at least among the proponents of a 'high chronology' of Frataraka rule.

Let us quickly recall the numismatic evidence. In the early years of his rule, Vahbarz seems to have adopted the iconography of the coins issued by his predecessor, Ardashir (Figure 1 = coin A), the first native Persian dynast since the demise of the Achaemenids, and whose coinage features a curious blend of Seleukid and Achaemenid iconography. Vahbarz also appears to have borne the title of a 'Frataraka', which was attested in the Achaemenid empire² in order to qualify a subsatrapal governor.³ On what appears to be his first series of coins⁴ (Figure 2 = coin B),⁵ Vahbarz used the same and now apparently somewhat worn obverse die as Ardashir,⁶ but subsequently adopted a new die which associates the ruler's portrait with the word *pr̥s*, i.e. 'Persia'.⁷ Some of Vahbarz's coins were even struck

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Fig. 1. Coin A: Ardashir, AR tetradrachm, Klose and Müsseler 2008, no. 2/9 (reused by permission).



Fig. 2. Coin B: Vahbarz, AR tetradrachm, Klose and Müsseler 2008, no. 2/11 (reused by permission).

on an earlier Frataraka obverse undertype, confirming the relative chronology of Vahbarz as successor to a previous dynast, Ardashir.⁸ A coin type (Figure 3 = coin C)⁹ that can likely be dated to after these initial series had at first been considered a modern fake,¹⁰ as it contrasts starkly with the usual iconography. However, since a second drachm with the same iconography has been found, the coin is now held to be genuine.¹¹ Whereas the obverse shows the usual portrait of the dynast, its reverse now depicts a Persian king slaying an armoured soldier. The coin's legend also shows significant changes, as we now find the ruler's name, then what has been read as *krm*, and finally a hitherto undeciphered word. On a third series (Figure 4 = coin D), usually placed after coin C – though the order might be reversed, as we will discuss, – Vahbarz uses the same obverse and reverse design as on coin B, but there is a Greek monogram under the fire sanctuary, and the legend refers to both the ruler's name and the word *krm* again.

Besides the numismatic evidence, there are also some literary sources which probably refer to Vahbarz who is usually identified with the Oborzoz mentioned in Polyainos:¹²

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Fig. 3. Coin C: Vahbarz, AR tetradrachm, Klose and Müseler 2008, no. 2/16a (reused by permission).



Fig. 4. Coin D: Vahbarz, AR tetradrachm, Klose and Müseler 2008, no. 2/15 (reused by permission).

When Oborzoz was informed that a conspiracy had been formed against him by three thousand settlers in Persia, he discharged them, and banished them to a place in Persia, called Komastos, to which they were escorted by a strong guard. The country abounded with villages; it was very populous, and the roads were well accommodated with inns. In the towns, where they were lodged, they were dispersed in several inns; and the inn-keepers were ordered by the guards, who escorted them, and who surrounded the towns, each to kill his lodgers. Accordingly they made their lodgers drunk, and then killed them. In this way, the three thousand were murdered in the night, and buried, without any tumult or confusion.¹³

This episode is strikingly reminiscent of an anecdote in Polyainos associated with the Macedonian commander Seiles:

In order to rid himself of three thousand Persians, who had been involved in a revolt, Seiles pretended to have received a threatening letter from Seleukos. He told them that, by their assistance, he hoped to bring Seleukos to reason. For this purpose, he instructed them to assemble at Randa, a town not far distant, and he promised to meet them there. In a deep and sheltered valley nearby, Seiles posted three hundred Macedonian and

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Thracian cavalrymen, along with three thousand heavy-armed troops. He ordered them, as soon as they saw a bronze shield raised up, to charge out and cut the Persians to pieces. The Persians assembled as they had been instructed; and Seiles' plan was executed so effectively, that all three thousand were massacred.¹⁴

Until now, the numismatic and literary evidence has always been exclusively analysed on the basis of a 'conflictual' model of Frataraka history in which the Frataraka violently assert their independence from their Macedonian overlords. Accordingly, the texts by Polyainos are interpreted as indicators of anti-Seleukid unrest in Persia, most probably triggered by the Frataraka dynast Vahbarz himself. Coin C is thus generally held to represent a stylised Persian 'king' slaying a Seleukid soldier and is interpreted as a direct illustration of the political events alluded to by Polyainos.¹⁵

The precise historical interpretation of the evidence mainly depends on the general chronology assumed for Frataraka rule. A high dating of the Frataraka sees both texts as variants of a single model and uses the reference 'king Seleukos' in the Seiles episode to date the similar episode involving Oborzos to the time of the first¹⁶ or the second king to bear the name of Seleukos,¹⁷ relying on the model of a 'weak' Seleukid empire in order to explain Persia's secession. The low dating, however, separates both texts, seeing the Oborzos episode alone as a reference to a late 3rd- or early 2nd-century Vahbarz, whereas the Seiles episode is dismissed as an isolated event from the reign of Seleukos I. Thus, Vahbarz's coin and Polyainos' texts become, for 'high' and 'low', evidence for a very early Persian struggle for national freedom.¹⁸ Once this circular hypothesis has been stated, the archaeological remains are generally scanned for possible corroborations, dating issues that still remain controversial like the partial destruction of the citadel of Pasargadai, the Tell-i Takht,¹⁹ according to the chosen chronology. This broad chronological context is then assumed to furnish also a date for a text from Pliny who alluded to a double victory of the Seleukid general Noumenios over a Persian army and fleet during the reign of a 'king Antiochos':

Noumenios, who was made governor of Mesene by king Antiochos, while fighting against the Persians, defeated them at sea, and at low water, by land, with an army of cavalry, on the same day; in memory of which event he erected a twofold trophy on the same spot, in honour of Jupiter and Neptune.²⁰

In the 'conflictual' model, King 'Antiochos' is identified with various rulers based on the high or low chronology: Antiochos I or even Antiochos II²¹ if one adopts the former, or subsequent rulers such as Antiochos III or Antiochos IV if one opts for the latter.

II. Vahbarz, a rebel?

Nevertheless, if we re-examine both texts from a ‘pacific’ point of view, and if we are adopting the ‘high chronology’ which, for reasons argued elsewhere,²² is highly plausible,²³ an entirely different pattern emerges. First, let us reconsider the literary evidence. It is quite obvious that the two texts by Polyainos must be the result of the accidental duplication of one and the same anecdote through the hazards of tradition, as the general line of narration is perfectly symmetrical.²⁴ Indeed, in the Seiles episode, a Greek or Macedonian²⁵ official stationed in Persia²⁶ uses Graeco-Macedonian troops²⁷ in order to quell unrest among Persian auxiliary troops; in the Oborzos episode, a Persian official uses the obedience of his troops to strike down Greek or Macedonian *katoikoi* moving through Persia.²⁸ Though it is impossible to reconstruct the original version, it has been argued that the texts attest the existence of an anti-Greek rebellion in what appears to be early Seleukid Persia. However, both texts only show the submissive attitude of soldiers and settlers in front of an imperial representative belonging to the respectively ‘other’ ethnos and depict a political situation clearly characterised by general obedience despite dissatisfaction, not by open rebellion and fighting.

If the original story which was accidentally duplicated by Polyainos or his sources was the one referring to the 3000 Persian soldiers, one has to underline the fact that military control over Persia obviously still lay in the hands of important contingents of Persian auxiliary troops commanded by Greek or Macedonian officers. Thus the Seleukids seemed to have been fairly convinced of their subjects’ long-term loyalty, as the garrisoning of Persian soldiers in the heartland of the former Achaemenid Empire might have been seen as a great risk to imperial security. Moreover, the soldiers did much more than simply follow the orders of their Greek commander Seiles: they visibly trusted his intention of resolving the matter at hand through open discussion and believed he might defend their case in front of a ‘misinformed’ king Seleukos. If, however, the version recounting 3000 Greek or Macedonian *katoikoi* was the original, one observes that a Persian official seems to have been endowed with enough military or civil power to organise the journey of Seleukid settlers to (or from) their new homes and to assign them to temporary lodgings.

Neither version is a situation in which Persian rebels raided helpless Greek colonists, but is on the contrary simply the account of a Seleukid military official with a Persian name (Oborzos), perhaps presiding over auxiliary troops, who had to face the hostility of a smallish contingent of Greek settlers.²⁹ These settlers were probably discontented either with their new homes or the esteem the Persian nobility enjoyed from the new

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government, and the official used his troops in order to re-establish order in favour of the actual government. This vision of things is by no means exaggerated, as it exactly parallels the case of the well-known revolts of the Greek colonists in Baktria in 325 and again in 323 after the death of Alexander,³⁰ brutally struck down on both occasions. Even more interesting, Diodoros, perhaps confusing both events,³¹ states that during the first uprising 3000 Greek settlers were killed by the Macedonian soldiers, whereas two years later another group of 3000 settlers (perhaps even the same?)³² was first granted free leave, but then was treacherously annihilated. Why Diodoros or his source, Hieronymos of Kardia,³³ as well as Polyainos or his source, spoke of 3000 settlers must remain speculation. Nevertheless, it seems obvious that the parallelisms in narrative as well as in figures might suggest that, at one point, the source describing the killing of Greek settlers by the troops under the orders of Oborzos was embellished after a description of how the Baktrian uprising was quelled. The ‘Seleukos’ in question is then either still Seleukos I, making Ardashir’s rule probably too short-lived, or Seleukos II. In the latter case, the revolt of the *katoikoi* may even have been related to the war between Seleukos II and Ptolemy III Euergetes or Antiochos Hierax or to the secession of Baktria from the Seleukid Empire.³⁴

III. The word *kmy*

The word deciphered as *kmy* on two of Vahbarz’s coin series gives another typical example of the limitations of the ‘conflictual’ model. The word, which does not exist in Aramaic, is usually thought of as referring to the Persian office of *κάρανος*, a *hapax* attested only in Xenophon:

Kyros, who had come in order to be ruler of all the peoples on the coast and to support the Lacedaemonians in the war, brought with him a letter, addressed to all the dwellers upon the sea and bearing the King’s seal, which contained among other things these words: ‘I send down Kyros as *karanos* of those whose mustering-place is Kastolos.’³⁵

The title of *κάρανος* clearly refers to an Achaemenid official who supervised military issues such as the mustering and leading of troops in a territory composed of several satrapies.³⁶ Despite this rather restrained aim, defenders of the ‘conflictual’ model consider the title, referring here only to the empire’s Western satrapies along the coast, to be an equivalent for the aforementioned office of commander of the upper, Iranian, satrapies.³⁷ Unfortunately, there is no evidence that the office of governor of the upper satrapies was ever labelled with the title *κάρανος*. Furthermore, the regular designation of a governor of the upper satrapies is not even attested during the Achaemenid period, but is only attested for the hellenistic era.

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Antigonos and Seleukos, who used this office as the administrative basis of his son Antiochos' co-regency, both appointed such officials. Thus, a *hapax* on a Frataraka coin using the Aramaic alphabet (and at least also partially the Aramaic language) is identified with a Greek *hapax* in Xenophon at least a century earlier. Additionally, the Achaemenid military office whose continuity is (re)constructed from this evidence is not analysed by means of the Achaemenid evidence alone, but by contaminating the issue with data that is only pertinent to Seleukid rule.

Even more inconsistently, the 'conflictual' model interprets the adoption of the title *κάρανος* as evidence for the supra-regional ambitions of the Frataraka and thus as proof for their aggressive insolence,³⁸ as they seemed to have claimed a vice-regal power over all 'upper satrapies' equal to the power once wielded by Antiochos I. Furthermore, they underline that the title was adopted by the Frataraka in order to show that they still wanted to avoid the title 'king', as this would have been seen as open rebellion.³⁹ This is a curious argument, as, from a Seleukid point of view, the title 'king', assumed by minor secessionist dynasts like the Attalids, the Arsakids and the Diodotids since the middle 3rd century, would have been much more acceptable than the arrogation of the administration of the whole of the upper satrapies.⁴⁰

But if we accept that Polyainos' Oborzos and the Frataraka Vahbarz was nothing other than a loyal Seleukid official or client dynast who was obeyed by Greek and Macedonian settlers, his apparent aggression might be seen in a wholly new light. Obviously, Vahbarz first adopted the conventional designs of his predecessors when taking his office, as shown by coin type B (Figure 2), but at some point of his career he seems to have gained a new status, displayed on the coin types C (Figure 3) and D (Figure 4) and related to the word *krny*. We saw that the identification of *κάρανος* with the office of vice-king of the upper satrapies and thus the supposition of Vahbarz's anti-Seleukid Iranian expansionism seems somewhat rash. First, such a usurpation would imply temporary control over more than just Persia; an expansion that would have had to be quelled by the Seleukids, but left no trace whatever in our records. Second, at least from a Seleukid point of view, the titular usurpation of the vice-regency over the East would have been much more difficult to tolerate than the title 'king' (*mlk*) which the Frataraka eventually adopted in the 160s under Daryan I.

If we want to find a more convincing explanation for the legend of coin types C and D, we need another interpretation of the title *krny* (קרני). In light of our interpretation of the Polyainos episode, it seems most likely that *krny* was not in itself a sign of anti-Seleukid behaviour, but was instead

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the display of a title or function that was more or less voluntarily conceded or conferred upon the Frataraka by the Seleukids themselves, as the right to muster and command native troops, thus making the Frataraka, previously the subordinates of the Persian satrap, military commanders in their own right in an emergency. And if we consider the rest of ancient evidence for the office of *κάραυος*, it becomes clear that the *κάρανοι* were not permanent vice-kings commanding several satrapies, as was the case with Antiochos' exceptional co-regency over the upper satrapies, but simply supra-regional military officials specifically appointed to muster and occasionally lead troops from several satrapies to accomplish precise objectives, sometimes not even officiating themselves as satraps, as has been convincingly summarized by Klinkott:⁴¹

The 'Karanoi/*Stratēgoi* of those at the Sea' were commanders, within the context of large military zones, in charge of a part of the assembly of the general troop levy at special gathering places which were attested in Alexander's time. Such a Karanos had to supervise the maximum levying of troops from the different satrapies, the satrapal armies themselves, the mobile imperial troops from the garrisons and perhaps even contingents of mercenaries; he had also to keep them fit through training and to optimize logistics, equipment and organization of this army group in view of its final deployment. [...] Given his broad competences, the Karanos was superior, within the military hierarchy, to the different Strategoi or Satraps. However, this does not imply that he could also order by himself the assembling of troops or actively dispose of the army, though the Karanoi could also, in addition to their proper function, assume the duties of Strategoi. (trans. Engels)⁴²

Strangely, it has not yet been noted that the Persian dynasts were not the only ones to have adopted the title of *κάραυος*. Arsakes, the founder of the Parthian empire, also used the title *κρμν* (𐭠𐭣𐭥) beside his name on a bilingual coin.⁴³ Several similarities with and differences from Frataraka coinage are obvious. First, the use of the same title suggests a similar political situation or at least external representation of the dynasts, as it should not be forgotten that the Aramaic title was addressed to a different audience than the Greek legend. Second, the other coin types of Arsakes offer us the chance to see how he wanted the Aramaic title to be understood in Greek: he maintained the same iconography but simply used the word *autokratōr* instead of *κρμν*.⁴⁴ Third, one has to consider that Parthian coinage immediately begins with Arsakes' *autokratōr*- and *κρμν*-coins, whereas the Frataraka coinage offers an example of much slower progress towards the eventual assumption of the title *κρμν* which disappears under Vahbarz's successors.

These similarities and differences permit the following hypotheses.

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It seems well attested in our sources that Andragoras, the *praefectus Parthorum*, had already seceded from the Seleukid Empire before the Parni conquered the area and ended his short-lived reign.⁴⁵ This made it rather probable that Seleukos II, whose attention was focused during the middle of the 3rd century on the confrontation with Antiochos Hierax and with the Ptolemies, viewed the incursions of the Parni into Parthia as either a potential stroke of luck or he outright invited it. Thus, he might have hoped that nomadic raids would prevent Andragoras from possibly expanding into the weakened East of the empire, all the while keeping the Baktrians occupied and prevented them from annexing the South-Eastern Iranian Satrapies. Furthermore, whereas a seceding Andragoras made it impossible for the Seleukids not to react, his elimination by the Parthians enabled the Seleukids to look for a diplomatic solution without losing face.⁴⁶ Even when Arsakes finally stabilised the situation in the 240s, the Seleukids might have seen the new Parthian state, fully occupied with its inner stabilisation⁴⁷ and the confrontation with the Baktrians under Diodotos I,⁴⁸ as a smaller threat to their power and to the loyalty of their troops and colonies than a charismatic seceding satrap such as Andragoras. However, the alliance concluded by Arsakes and Diodotos II at some point after the death of Diodotos I in 239 endangered the balance of powers in the East and provoked the subsequent anabasis of Seleukos II around 228.⁴⁹ Seleukos II seems to have been initially successful, forcing Arsakes to seek refuge with the Sacae. Nevertheless, the outbreak of new hostilities in the West compelled Seleukos II to conclude a formal treaty recognising Arsakes' power over Parthia,⁵⁰ but obviously forestalling any further Parthian expansion at least until the accession to power of Antiochos III.⁵¹ It is notable that neither Arsakes I nor Arsakes II, unlike Diodotos II, adopted the title of *basileus*: Arsakes I confined himself to the title *autokratōr* and *kēmy*, whereas Arsakes II only displayed the word *Arsakes* which by then had become a quasi-monarchic title.⁵²

Though it is difficult, if not impossible, to date the coins of Arsakes I precisely,⁵³ the title of *autokratōr* or *kēmy* should thus be considered as the official title conferred (or conceded) by Seleukos II on the Parthian dynast in order to define Arsakes' official status within the realm. A similar context and proceeding should then also be assumed for Vahbarz. Furthermore, the high-dating of Vahbarz's reign proposed in this study and his possible association with Seleukos II through the Oborzos episode implies the strong possibility that his *kēmy*-coins antedated those of Arsakes, who may have imitated Vahbarz when he adopted the title *kēmy*. If so, this points even more to the idea that Vahbarz did not want to challenge Seleukid rule, but proposed from the beginning a *modus vivendi* already successful in Persia.

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Regardless, the new title borne by Vahbarz as well as Arsakes would not have been a provocation, but a carefully negotiated compromise, acknowledging their role as pro-Seleukid *autokratōr* in a situation of obvious military emergency which clearly designated their status as a client dynast. This fact was later emphasised by Antiochos III who explicitly considered the Parthian and Baktrian rulers as his satraps,⁵⁴ and he would doubtless have had a similar attitude towards Persia.

IV. The legend on coin C

It is impossible to elucidate the mystery of the *κάρανος* Vahbarz without discussing the fundamental philological issue of the legend of coin type C (Figure 3). This coin not only mentions, like coin type D, the title *kmy*, but also has some other elements which diverge from the usual terminology of *ptrrk' zhy-'lhy'*. Whereas the dynast's name appears as usual on the left side of the coin (*whwbrz*) and his title on the right, the illegible words appear at the bottom of the coin and have been read as *dnt-zγ* (דנ-ת) ⁵⁵ or as *wzt-zγ* (ו-ת). ⁵⁶ Unfortunately, neither word makes sense in Middle Persian or Aramaic, ⁵⁷ and we are not helped by the fact that in the Aramaic alphabet, many letters such as D, K, R and W (ד, כ, ר, ו) look nearly identical. Moreover, on Frataraka coinage, Persian and Aramaic terms are very often intermingled with Achaemenid and hellenistic official terminology, and the poor orthography of many Frataraka coins is often marked by missing or misspelled letters. Thus, the first letter has been read as D or W, but may also be an R or K. The second one has been read as Z or N (ז, נ), and the third has usually been seen as a T (ת), but a contraction of two other letters or even an inversion of another similar letter such as H or Ḥ (ח, ה) cannot be excluded.

The last two letters have been associated with the letters Z and Y, forming the word *zy* (יז), which is well attested on many other Frataraka coin legends. However, *zy* is a classical relative particle which always forms a construction expressing genitive relationships between the two words linked by *zy*, ⁵⁸ like the Hebrew *ba-* or the Arabic *al-*. This leaves us with a major problem: there is a word before the *zy*, but not after, though neither *kmy* nor the dynast's name makes any sense as the second element in a *zy*-construction. But it would be quite curious if, on a carefully crafted coin such as coin C with a relatively short legend and plenty of space between script and image, a whole word had been forgotten. This case is even more perplexing because there is enough space on the left side of the coin to add the 'missing' word in a similar way as *'lhy* has been added (albeit clumsily) on several other Frataraka coins. The obvious solution would be to identify the undeciphered letters not with the two first words of an

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imperfect zy -construction (leaving us with an additional missing word and making the whole coin incomprehensible for us, (as for the contemporary Persians)), but instead to suppose that this five-letter word probably is not Aramaic – based like most Semitic languages on two- or three-consonant radicals – but Persian, an Indo-European language based on words with a variable number of consonants and vowels.

If one reconsiders the last two letters without looking for a zy , they might also be read as N and Y or even W and Y, which both adds to our uncertainty, but also creates new possibilities. We must first make a methodological disclaimer, though: it would be preposterous to propose anything without mentioning that, given our lack of information concerning Frataraka history and writing habits, any hypothesis is a pure guesswork. A distinct possibility would be not to read the word, as has been done until now, as Aramaic dnt-zy (דנת-זי) or wzt-zy (זת-זי), but rather as Persian⁵⁹ wnwty (ونموي), vocalised $WaNaTaWY$, expressing the Persian word for ‘victory’, *vanatay*,⁶⁰ and stressing the obvious military iconography of the coin. One might even consider that the beginning of the word points not to *vanatay*, but to *vanana*, ‘victorious over’, asking for a complement to express a place. Indeed, if we suspect that the second N might have been skipped in order to avoid the reduplication, and if we suppose that what has been read as a T is in fact a retrograde H, faults not unusual at all in early Frataraka coinage,⁶¹ then this would in turn leave us with wn(n)-hwy , a word which could be vocalised $WaNa(na)-HuWaYa$ (וננ-הוי), *vanana-hwaja*, meaning ‘victorious over Susiana’,⁶² referring to a successful military expedition of Frataraka forces into Susiana, perhaps during Ptolemy’s III invasion of Babylonia in 245 during the Third Syrian War, as we will discuss later.⁶³

V. The control monogram and the historical context

Thus, Vahbarz may not have been a self-styled Iranian vice-king who usurped control over the whole Upper Satrapies in defiance of Seleukid authority, but a client dynast who occupied, in a situation of military emergency, a higher military office extending over Persia and perhaps some adjacent Eastern satrapies such as Gedrosia, Drangiane or Karmania. In this sense, he would not appear very dissimilar to the Armenian nobles Artaxias and Zariadres, who were named satraps of Armenia and Sophene by Antiochos III.⁶⁴ This would also explain why one of Vahbarz’s coins (coin D, Figure 4) shows a distinctly Greek monogram. It has been supposed that the monogram was further evidence for Vahbarz’s anti-Seleukid hostility,⁶⁵ but this assumption seems quite absurd: why should an anti-Greek rebellion have used a Greek control monogram on its first

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independent coinage, and what would have been the audience for such an attempt? It is much more probable that the control monogram is exactly what it should be: a technical link attesting the involvement of an official Seleukid mint in the fabrication of Vahbarz's coin. This hypothesis is strengthened by the monogram itself. It combines the letters ΠΤΥΜΑ and is identical with a control monogram found only on certain coins from Antiochos' I co-regency 294–281 or even his subsequent sole rule, probably struck in Drangiane or Western Arachosia as suggested by their known provenances.⁶⁶ In such a situation it would not be surprising that he had to deal with the smaller Eastern Iranian satrapies adjacent to Persia, which would explain why his new office and his military successes were advertised by the local mints. As the relative chronology of coin types C and D has never been convincingly studied, we may even assume that coin type D, whose reverse follows the classical Frataraka schema apart from the title and the monogram, antedated coin type C and thus celebrated Vahbarz's new status. Coin type C would then show Vahbarz's subjects that his pride was not unjustified, as it shows a Persian ruler stabbing an armoured soldier with his knife and explicitly registering his 'Victory' through the coin's legend.

This leads us to the crucial question of who is the slain soldier. If we assume that the 'king Seleukos' associated with Oborzoz is Seleukos I, then we can link the coin to the presence of Persian troops under the walls of Damascus during the reign of a king Antiochos.⁶⁷ If the identification of this monarch with Antiochos I is accepted, his subsequent victory over Ptolemaic forces through a clever military stratagem intimately related to his Persian soldiers would offer a perfect explanation of why Vahbarz would have wanted (and been permitted) to commemorate a military victory over 'Greek' troops in his coinage and to style it after the example of traditional Assyrian or Achaemenid symbolism.

If, however, we associate 'king Seleukos' from Polyainos with Seleukos II – and this is the more probable solution –, we may suppose that Persian troops under direct control of a Frataraka dynast became active during the troubled years of the Third Syrian War 246–241 and the more or less simultaneous 'War of Brothers',⁶⁸ the secession of the Parthian satrap Andragoras and the subsequent infiltration of the Parni between 247 and 238,⁶⁹ or at the time of the secession of the Baktrian satrap Diodotos between 255 and 239,⁷⁰ whose son Diodotos II would go on to conclude an alliance with the Parthians against the Seleukids.⁷¹ In all these cases, Persia gained an important geostrategic status. To the north, Persia was henceforth only separated from the new Parthian frontier by the great salt desert and the important West-Eastern road at the south of the Elburz

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mountains probably still under Seleukid control.⁷² Similarly, Persia also commanded access to the Eastern road leading from Persis to Karmania, Drangiana and Arachosia,⁷³ satrapies still partially under Seleukid control, but potentially under threat from Baktria, which also explains Vahbarz's nomination as *κάρανος* and the presence of an Eastern-Iranian control monogram on his coins. Finally, we should not forget that at roughly the same time, in January 245, during the Third Syrian War, Ptolemy III managed to lead his armies to the walls of Babylon, as is attested by cuneiform chronicles.⁷⁴ He then installed his own governors and even boasted that he subdued the most important Iranian satrapies (Susiana, Persis and Media) as far as Baktria.⁷⁵ The reasons why Ptolemy III agreed in 241, despite the temporary occupation of central parts of the Seleukid Empire, to a peace treaty leaving him only with the possession of Seleukeia Pieria, have never been convincingly elucidated, though revolts in Egypt and the death of Seleukos' II rival Antiochos, son of Berenike,⁷⁶ have often been cited to explain the dissolution of Ptolemaic control over Syria and Mesopotamia.⁷⁷ Nevertheless, we should not exclude the importance of the bonds of loyalty the Seleukids would have managed to construct with their Oriental subjects. It might be possible to suppose that fresh troops from nearby Persia may have made the decisive difference in southern Babylonia or Susiana. Thus they would have compelled Ptolemy to retreat to Syria in order to defend his overstretched conquests, though at the same time legitimating the Lagid's boast of having subdued (meaning 'fought') the lands up to Baktria, which indeed gained a certain autonomy from Seleukos II during these years. All these situations would have given the Persian Frataraka sufficient possibilities to show their loyalty to the Seleukids and to fight against troops using Greek military equipment; exploits then commemorated on their coins advertising their 'victory'.

VI. The stabbed soldier

All this shows the questionable nature of the 'conflictual' interpretation of coin type C, for which the armoured soldier stabbed to death by a Persian 'king' in a position reminiscent of similar Assyrian and Achaemenid scenes⁷⁸ must be a Seleukid soldier,⁷⁹ and for which the aggressiveness of the scene illustrates Polyainos and corresponds to the destruction level of period II or, depending on 'high' or 'low' chronology, level III of Pasargadai.⁸⁰

However, if we accept a 'non-conflictual' model of Frataraka-Seleukid coexistence, the slain soldier's apparently 'Greek dress' does not necessarily point to Seleukid soldiers,⁸¹ but rather to the Seleukids' numerous internal and external Greek enemies, as the tradition of depicting the killing of one's own (Greek or Macedonian) enemies goes back before the beginnings of

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Hellenism in the East. Already the north fronton of the so-called Alexander sarcophagus shows very similar scenes of killing between Greek and Macedonian soldiers.⁸² Thus, the celebration of a Persian victory over the 'Greek' troops of the Ptolemies scarcely would have annoyed the Seleukid king, be it Antiochos I in the context of the First Syrian War or Seleukos II who might have been rather content to receive Persian support against his many 'Greek' foes from Lagid Egypt, Andragorid Parthia, Diodotid Baktria or the territories held by Antiochos Hierax. Indeed, a revival of local patriotism on a limited series of loyalist Frataraka coins may even have been seen as an interesting propagandistic means of strengthening Seleukid rule by appealing to traditional animosities. And, at exactly the same time, the Babylonian chronicles present the invasion of the Egyptian troops as an incursion of 'godless' 'Hanean' soldiers armed 'with iron weapons'⁸³ – three interesting descriptions, as they show how local officials used traditional resentments in order to discredit the enemy. The godlessness of course suggests that the Egyptian enemies are also enemies of the divine order, defended by the righteous king of Babylon, the Seleukid king, whereas the use of iron (or bronze) armour, characteristic of course not only of the Ptolemaic, but also the Seleukid army, also occurs in much older descriptions of Assyrian armies. The mention of the 'Haneans' finally refers to Hana, a kingdom from Old and Middle Babylonian times situated on the middle Euphrates, but is used in hellenistic times as equivalent for Macedonia and thus to characterise the Greeks and Macedonians.⁸⁴ Hence, a traditional, no longer extant term is thus first used to qualify the new Macedonian rule. Then, after its general acceptance, as evidenced by the Borsippa-cylinder, where Seleukos is qualified as Macedonian, but not Antiochos, or by other texts, where the Seleukid army becomes the army of Akkad, the term is reutilised in order to denigrate the Egyptian ruler's Greek army.

Not only the Seleukids, but also the Ptolemies took care to present their victories against their enemies to their oriental subjects as being the fulfilment of traditional resentments. Thus, Ptolemaic victories over Seleukid troops regularly become 'Egyptian' victories against a 'Persian' enemy in order to strengthen the new dynasty's legitimacy and enlarge its popular support within the traditionally anti-Persian Egyptian population.⁸⁵ Even though it has been disputed whether an ostrakon from Karnak really designated Antiochos II as 'friend of the Persians',⁸⁶ numerous testimonies show us that the Ptolemies tried to adopt the usual pharaonic stereotype of the hereditary Persian enemy.⁸⁷ Ptolemy I⁸⁸ claimed to have restored divine statues robbed by Cambyses,⁸⁹ and similarly, Ptolemy II boasted on a stele from Pithom that he had restored, during the First Syrian War,

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captured Egyptian statues from 'Prstt' (Palestine?).⁹⁰ The women parading as the personification of the Greek cities in Asia 'once under the rule of the Persians' during the *pompē* of Ptolemy II around 262 also more than likely had an anti-Seleukid edge,⁹¹ celebrating the Ptolemies as liberators from the new 'Persian' domination. Similarly, the Euergetes papyrus from 246⁹² insists on the vicious role played by the Persian Seleukid satrap Aribazos against the righteous claims of the Berenike-party and gloats over his public execution.⁹³ Ptolemy III also associated his campaigns against the Seleukid empire with attempts to repatriate divine images robbed by the Achaemenids,⁹⁴ and Ptolemy IV insisted as well, on a stele celebrating the victory of Raphia, that king Antiochos III had mutilated the statues of Egyptian gods and that the Ptolemaic king spent valuable time in rescuing these statues.⁹⁵ Moreover, the Ptolemaic king is shown in a syncretistic style as Pharaoh sitting Macedonian-style on a rearing horse, a representation not unlike earlier depictions of Seleukos II on horseback, minted at Seleukeia and an (as yet) undefined mint in order to commemorate the expulsion of the Ptolemies.⁹⁶ But what is interesting is that while Seleukos II is depicted alone, Ptolemy IV is shown accompanied by his wife Arsinoe and appears transfixing, with his spear, a kneeling enemy presented to him by the god Atum.⁹⁷ Unfortunately, the figure of the vanquished soldier is badly mutilated. However, both possible aspects of his iconography are intriguing. Either, the artists represented the 'enemy' as a Greek, implying thus not only that the Pharaoh himself was above such ethnic distinctions, but also that he authorised the representation of his fellow countrymen as traditional 'enemies': this hypothesis might make it quite interesting for the Seleukid king to tolerate, in a similar fashion, the issuing of Vahbarz's coin type C. Or the enemy was represented following the traditional Egyptian iconography of the bearded 'Asian' soldier,⁹⁸ in which case it is equally interesting to consider that official Ptolemaic art and propaganda viewed the Seleukid enemies not as Greeks, but as Asian barbarians.

Hence, Babylonian chroniclers as well as Ptolemaic kings drew heavily on traditional ethnic stylisations and national resentments at more or less the same time in order to stabilise the new hellenistic rule and find a compromise between the realities of the mid 3rd century and canonised pre-Alexandrian modes of historical and political expression. In depicting themselves as patriotic champions, victorious against outer enemies, be they shown as Greeks, Egyptians or Persians, they tried to obscure the fact that the political situation of the hellenistic world had ceased to resemble the political framework evoked by a canonised iconography. In such an atmosphere, it seems quite implausible that the Seleukids themselves would not have tolerated a similar patriotic iconography from their Persian

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subjects. Indeed, one might even suppose that they simply did not feel personally concerned by the representation of a defeated ‘Greek’ soldier on a client dynast’s coin. Seleukos I had already chosen to depict on his own trophy-coins⁹⁹ from 305/4–295 Nike crowning a trophy built out of the distinctively Greek-style weapons representing the enemies of the Seleukids. Similarly, Seleukos II, a direct contemporary of coin type C in the chronology presented here, depicted himself on some bronze coins as riding horned king stabbing a fallen soldier, identified by his shield as Galatian (or Ptolemaic),¹⁰⁰ with his sarissa.¹⁰¹ In this perspective, the ‘Persian’ ruler killing a ‘non-Persian’ soldier should not be taken at face value as evidence for anti-Seleukid resentments, but may symbolise exactly the opposite and show the victory of a Persian dynast loyal to the Seleukid house fighting against Ptolemaic, Andragorid or Baktrian troops.

In this respect, we need not regard the Noumenios episode narrated by Pliny as evidence for conflicts between imperial and rebellious Persian troops during the early Seleukid rule.¹⁰² If one considers Persia’s lack of sea-ports with any direct connection to the central plain around Persepolis, and if we recall the strong military presence of the Seleukids in Media, Mesopotamia and Babylonia, the military and economic heart of their empire, it would be rather surprising if a rebellious Persian dynast, surrounded by hostile Seleukid satraps, spent his time and money in order to construct a substantial fleet and to antagonise the strong Seleukid navy in the Persian Gulf instead of simply fortifying the mountain passes and cutting off Seleukid trade by raiding harbours such as Antiocheia in Persis by land. Thus, it is much more probable that the episode narrated by Pliny simply refers to an expedition against Iranian pirates established in coastal strongholds.¹⁰³ If we consider moreover the interest Antiochos III had in Gerrha¹⁰⁴ and the reintegration of the coastal route from Karmania to Elymais during his *Anabasis*,¹⁰⁵ and if we recall the new foundation of Charax under Antiochos IV, the obvious dating of Pliny’s Noumenios-episode is to the period of Antiochos III¹⁰⁶ or IV,¹⁰⁷ but certainly not to that of Antiochos I or II. As testimony for the Frataraka, Pliny’s anecdote concerning Noumenios is of no value in any case.

VII. Conclusion

As a conclusion to this study, let us briefly re-examine the results obtained through a combination of high chronology and the perspective of Seleukid loyalty. At some early point in Seleukid domination over Iran, the new hellenistic rulers would have instituted a working alliance with one of the great Persian noble houses in order to gain the support of the aristocracy and stabilise their influence over the former centre of Achaemenid power.

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To this end, the Seleukids granted a certain degree of political power to this noble house, elevated it to the dignity of Frataraka and combined this position with the right to mint coins in order to cover their protocolary, administrative and military expenses and advertise the new, partly autonomous position of central Persia. The first Frataraka, Ardashir, accordingly expressed his new status by merging Seleukid and Achaemenid iconography on his coins (coin type A) and thus drew his legitimacy from his Seleukid overlords as well as from his cultural commitment to Achaemenid heritage. This was also expressed in the construction of a new palace at Persepolis and in the use of spolia in subsequent constructions throughout Persia. The presence of trophy coins from Seleukos I in Frataraka coin hoards and the occasional overstriking of these pieces has led me in a previous paper¹⁰⁸ to date Ardashir's coins to the time of the first Seleukid rule. At the same time I also stated that it seems possible that it was mainly Antiochos I who enhanced or even established this agreement either during his co-regency (294–281) or during his years as sole ruler (281–261). His personal political vision as half-Iranian and his experiences in the upper satrapies may have convinced him that greater Persian autonomy might contribute to the stabilisation of the empire, rather than to its fragmentation.

Depending on the identification of the 'king Seleukos' mentioned in the Seiles episode from Polyainos, one must either confine Ardashir's rule to the first years of Seleukos' I rule over the East only or place him rather in the time of the co-regency and the beginning of the sole rule of Antiochos I in order to enable his successor Vahbarz to be a contemporary of Seleukos I or II. As explained above, the latter variant seems much more likely, as Persia's strategic situation in the mid 3rd century was much more prone to enhance suddenly the Frataraka's political status and to permit an iconography based on a violent ethnic stylisation of the enemy. Thus, Ardashir's successor Vahbarz has to be dated in the last years of Antiochos I, the rule of Antiochos II (261–246) and at least the first tormented years of Seleukos II (246–226). In this context, it is difficult to say if the aforementioned role played by Persian troops before Damascus during the First Syrian War (274–271) has to be associated with Ardashir or with Vahbarz. The first possibility seems marginally more plausible, as an association with Vahbarz would lead us to assume that he kept the same coin series for ca. 30 years without any changes.

After his confirmation as 'Frataraka' by Antiochos I (coin type B), Vahbarz was then at some moment promoted *karanos* of a larger Eastern Iranian territory (coin type C) as shown by the control monogram associated with a mint in Drangiane or Western Arachosia. He was

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successful in distinguishing himself in a military context and issued a third series of coins in order to celebrate his victory (coin type D). This special assignment may have been related to unrest from ‘rebelling’ Greek *katoikoi* cited by Polyainos. However, the iconography of coin type D makes it possible that Vahbarz played a role in Seleukos II’s confrontation with Andragorid or Diodotid troops in the mid 3rd century or was even involved in the resistance against the Ptolemaic invasion of Mesopotamia during the Third Syrian War (246–241). The Smyrnaean decree from 244 honouring Persian soldiers¹⁰⁹ also seems to imply that the Seleukids still had access to Persia as a basis for the recruiting of troops during this period, and even if it cannot be excluded that these Persian soldiers may have come from the Iranian diaspora in Asia Minor, the text shows once more the possibility of mutual confidence between the Seleukids and their Persian subjects.

In any case, the traditional vision that the wars of the mid 3rd century triggered the beginning of the Iranian plateau’s ambition to national ‘independence’ from hellenistic rule must be abandoned. On the contrary, the high probability that the Frataraka were loyal Iranian dynasts shows that the Seleukids had managed to construct a system of successful and long-enduring cooperation with the local elites.

Notes

¹ Cf. my 2013 study which first advanced many of these arguments. See now also Plischke 2014 and Engels 2017.

² Cowley 1923, no. 20, l. 4; no. 27, l. 4; no. 30, l. 5; no. 31, l. 5. Compare also Henning 1968; Bresciani 1984; Wiesehöfer 1991.

³ Cf. Boyce and Grenet 1991, 110–112; Wiesehöfer 1994, 105–108 with literature; Callieri 2007, 128–130; Klose and Möseler 2008, 18f.

⁴ Cf. Alram 1986, 167 f. (n° 526–532); Boyce and Grenet 1991, 114 f.; Wiesehöfer 1997, 110; Klose and Möseler 2008, 26–30 (n° 2/11–2/16).

⁵ This type corresponds to the coins (tetradrachms, hemidrachms and obols) in Alram 1986, n° 526–532 and Klose and Möseler 2008, n° 2/11–14 (the obol from 2/14 is somewhat of an exception, as its reverse shows only the standard; the coin, without any legend, could also be assigned to Ardashir); the tetradrachm shown here as example corresponds to Klose and Möseler 2008, n° 2/11 (Alram 1986, n° 526).

⁶ Cf. Alram 1986, 166 f. (corresponding to the die used for the coin n° 520); Houghton and Lorber 2002, 213 f., Klose and Möseler 2008, 26.

⁷ See Klose and Möseler, 2008, 26.

⁸ Cf. Curtis 2010, 387.

⁹ This iconography is now attested on two drachms corresponding to Klose and Möseler 2008, n° 2/16 (with ill. 17 and 18).

¹⁰ Alram 1987, 147–155; Wiesehöfer 2007, 48, n. 22: ‘The previously unknown two coins that show Wahbarz / Oborzus killing a kneeling Macedonian soldier are probably fakes.’

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¹¹ Cf. Wiesehöfer 2010.

¹² Head 1911, 196. Wiesehöfer 1994, 110 rightly points to the fact that nobody has yet challenged this identification, established by Justi 1895, 341.

¹³ Polyae. 7.40 (transl. P. Krentz and E. Wheeler, Chicago 1994). (Ὀβόρζος τρισχιλίους ἄνδρας τῶν ἐν τῇ Περσίδι κατοίκων ἐπιβουλεύοντας αἰσθόμενος ἀπεπέμψατο δοὺς ἡγεμόνας τῶν ὁδῶν, οἱ προήγαγον αὐτοὺς εἰς τινὰ τόπον τῆς Περσίδος, [ὅς] καλεῖται Κωμαστός, ἔνθα κῶμαι πυκναὶ καὶ λεῶς πολλὰ καὶ σταθμοὶ πολλοί. ἐπεὶ δὲ ἄλλος ἐν ἄλλῳ σταθμῷ κατήγετο, φυλακῆς ἰσχυρᾶς κυκλωσαμένης τὰς κώμας, ἕκαστος τῶν σταθμούχων τὸν ἴδιον ἐπίσταθμον εἰ μάλᾳ καταμεθύσας ἀπέκτεινε, τὰ δὲ σώματα τῶν τρισχιλίων ταφέντα διὰ νυκτὸς ἀφανῆ ἐγένοντο.) There is no discussion of this passage in Primo 2009a.

¹⁴ (24) Polyae. 7.39. (Σείλης τρισχιλίους Περσῶν νεωτερίζοντας κτεῖναι βουλόμενος ἐσκήφατο Σέλευκον αὐτῷ δι' ἐπιστολῆς χαλεπῶς ἀπειλεῖν αὐτὸς δὲ τῇ τούτων συμμαχίᾳ χρῆσάμενος ἐθέλειν αὐτὸν προλαβεῖν. ὅπως δ' ἂν βουλὴν ἀγάγοιεν, συνένταξεν αὐτοῖς ἀπαντὰν ἐς κώμην Ῥάνδα καλουμένην. οἱ μὲν πιστεύσαντες ἦκον, ὁ δὲ, ἦν γὰρ ἔλος βαθὺ καὶ κοῖλον ὑπὸ τὴν κώμην, ἐνταῦθα Μακεδόνων καὶ Θρακῶν ἱππεῖς τριακοσίους, ὀπλίτας τρισχιλίους ἀποκρύψας συνένταξεν, ὅταν ἴδωσι πέλτην χαλκὴν ἀρθείσαν, ἐκδραμόντας ἀναιρῆσαι πάντας τοὺς ἡθροισμένους. ἀνεδείχθη μὲν ἡ πέλτη, οἱ δὲ ἐκδραμόντες τοὺς τρισχιλίους Πέρσας κατεφόνευσαν.) A discussion of this major text seems to be missing in Primo 2009a.

¹⁵ Curiously, despite dating the Seiles anecdote in the time of Seleukos I, Wiesehöfer 2010, 112–114 seems to consider the anecdote as concerning Oborzoz whom he identifies with Vahbarz as belonging to the 2nd century, preferring thus to ignore the evident parallels of both traditions.

¹⁶ E.g. Bickermann 1966, 96 n. 44; Bar Kochva 1976, 33; Grainger 1990, 213; Sherwin-White and Kuhrt 1993, 29; Sekunda 2007. Bar Kochva even tried to identify the 300 Thracian and Macedonian cavalry with the 500 Thracian cavalry 'from the upper satrapies' attested in the army of Eumenes in 317 by Diod. 19.27.5, which is of course highly speculative.

¹⁷ Mittag 2006, p. 314; Klose and Müsseler 2008, 26. However, Seleukos IV (Stiehl 1969, 376) has also been considered.

¹⁸ Klose and Müsseler 2008, 26.

¹⁹ Cf. Stronach 1978, 155 f.; Wiesehöfer 1994, 115–117.

²⁰ Plin. 6.152 (transl. J. Bostock / H.T. Riley, London 1855.) ([...] *Numenium, ab Antiocho rege Mesenae praepositum, ibi vicisse eodem die classe aestuque reverso iterum equitatu contra Persas dimicantem et gemina tropaea eodem in loco Iovi ac Neptuno statuisse*).)

²¹ Klose and Müsseler 2008, 32.

²² Engels 2013.

²³ The 'high chronology' has generally been defended by: Herzfeld 1935 (around 300); Hill 1922, clxi (around 250); Newell 1938, 154–151 (around 280); Jenkins 1978, 198 (280); Stronach 1978, 146–155 (around 280); Koch 1988, 89–95 (1st half 3rd century); Mørkholm 1991 (between 290/285–250); Boyce and Grenet 1991, 116 (around 250); Sherwin-White and Kuhrt 1993, 76f. (vaguely speaking of 'third or early second century', but strictly separating the first coin series from the second, dated into 'the later second century'); Klose and Müsseler 2008;

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Houghton and Lorber 2002, Curtis 2010. Compare the useful compilation of 20th-century scholarship on this point in Wiesehöfer 1994, 115–118.

²⁴ Cf. however Sekunda 2007, 231, believing that ‘it is tempting to suggest that the hoplites were settled on the estates of the Persian rebels, and were the ancestors of the later *katoikoi*. This suggestion is, of course, highly speculative [...]’

²⁵ Cf. Sekunda 2007, 231 connecting the otherwise not attested Σείλης with the Macedonian name Σέλης, known from *LGP* IV, 307, and proposing that Seiles was a Macedonian.

²⁶ On Randa and Comastus, see the short notices in Kiessling 1914, 226 and Herrmann 1921, 1132.

²⁷ Contrary to Wiesehöfer 2010, 110, I see nowhere in the Seiles episode a reference to these troops as *katoikoi*.

²⁸ The identification of these *katoikoi* with Greek or Macedonian rather than Persian soldiers seems rather obvious to me, as it would have seemed rather pointless and dangerous to install Persian *katoikoi* in Persia instead of other regions. Cf. also Oertel 1921, 1–26. However, the term *katoikoi* could indeed point to the inhabitants of an autochthonous *kômē*; cf. Launey 1949, 337–353 (contra: Virgilio 1999, 137 f.). Nevertheless, if one assumes that the *katoikoi* massacred by Oborzoz were Persians, the story would point even more to the loyalty of the Persian aristocracy and make it impossible to see, on the basis of Polyainos, Oborzoz / Vahbarz as a client dynast attempting to secede from the Seleukid empire.

²⁹ This has already been seen by Bevan 1902b, 291, but generally been forgotten. Cf. Sherwin-White and Kuhrt 1993, 29; Grainger 1997, s.v. Seilas and Oborzoz.

³⁰ 323: Curt. Ruf. 9.7.1–11; Diod. 17.99. 325; 18.7.1–9 etc.

³¹ Goukowsky 1981, 13.

³² Holt 1988, 89; *contra*: Bernard 1990a, p. 33 f.

³³ Hornblower 1981, 74–87.

³⁴ See Wenghofer, Strootman and Coşkun in this volume.

³⁵ Xen. *Hell.* 1.4.3 (C.L. Brownson, London 1930) (καὶ Κῦρος, ἄρξων πάντων τῶν ἐπὶ θαλάττῃ καὶ συμπολεμῶσιν Λακεδαιμονίοις, ἐπιστολὴν τε ἔφερε τοῖς κάτω πᾶσι τὸ βασιλεῖον σφράγισμα ἔχουσαν, ἐν ᾗ ἐνῆν καὶ τάδε· Καταπέμπω Κῦρον κάρανον τῶν εἰς Καστωλὸν ἀθροισμένων. τὸ δὲ κάρανον ἔστι κύριον.).

³⁶ Petit 1983; Petit 1990, 133–143, proposing *karan(a), ‘he who commands the *kāra*’ (people or army) as etymology. Cf. Keen 1998.

³⁷ For more explanations, see Engels 2017.

³⁸ Cf. Klose and Müseler 2008, 28, speaking of ‘ungeheure Anmaßung’.

³⁹ Klose and Müseler 2008, 28: ‘Er stellte sich also noch nicht auf die gleiche Stufe wie sein seleukidischer Oberherr und vermied dadurch gerade noch die offene Anmaßung – anders als dann Arsakes [...]’

⁴⁰ See Wenghofer and Strootman in this volume.

⁴¹ Of 17 possible karanoi, only 5 were satraps: Klinkott 2005, 325 f.

⁴² Klinkott 2005, 329: ‘Die Karanoi/Strategen derer am Meer waren die Oberbefehlshaber, die einen Teil des Gesamtaufgebotes an bestimmten Sammelplätzen, wie sie aus der Alexanderzeit bekannt sind, innerhalb militärischer Großbereiche kommandierten. Solch ein Karanos hatte die maximalen Truppenaufgebote der verschiedenen Satrapien, die Satrapenheere selbst,

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die beweglichen Reichstruppen der Garnisonen und vielleicht sogar die Söldnertruppen zu kontrollieren, durch Training einsatzbereit zu halten, sowie Logistik, Ausrüstung und Organisation dieses Heeres für den Ernstfall zu verbessern. [...] Durch die übergreifende Verfügungsgewalt stand der Karanos in der militärischen Hierarchie über den einzelnen Strategen oder Satrapen. Das bedeutet allerdings nicht, daß er den Befehl für die Aufstellung aussprechen oder über diese Truppenmasse aktiv verfügen konnte, obwohl die Karanoi zusätzlich zu ihrem Amt auch gewöhnliche Strategenpflichten erfüllen konnten.' Compare somewhat differently, but essentially similar, Petit 1990, 143: 'Le karanos avait pour seule tâche de conquérir, pour le Roi et l'Empire, de nouveaux territoires: Samos (Otanès [1]), la Thrace et la Péonie (Mégabaze), l'Hellespont, Imbros et Lemnos (Otanès [2]), la Grèce (Mardonios, Datis et Hydarnès). Est-ce à dire qu'une fois à la tête de leur armée ils pouvaient agir à leur guise? Point. Il apparaît au contraire que chaque karanos devait rendre compte régulièrement des progrès de sa mission ou, si l'éloignement empêchait une liaison régulière, qu'ils avaient reçu, à leur départ, des instructions très précises.'

⁴³ Sellwood 1980, type 3. Cf. also Abgarians and Sellwood 1971, 104. Cf. also the bilingual coin Sellwood 1980, type 4, corresponding to the general disposition and iconography of type 3, but featuring what has been judged to be a slightly different Aramaic legend.

⁴⁴ See Sellwood 1980, type 1 and 2. The title's 'analysis' in Verstandig 2001, 32 is somewhat misleading.

⁴⁵ Just. 41.4.6 f.

⁴⁶ This point is made very clear by Euthydemos, who according to Polyb. 11.34.1–2 complained [...] πρὸς ὃν ἀπελογίζετο φάσκων ὡς οὐ δικαίως αὐτὸν Ἀντίοχος ἐκ τῆς βασιλείας ἐκβαλεῖν σπουδάζει: γεγονέναι γὰρ οὐκ αὐτὸς ἀποστάτης τοῦ βασιλέως, ἀλλ' ἐτέρων ἀποστάντων ἐπανελόμενος τοὺς ἐκείνων ἐκγόνους, οὕτως κρατῆσαι τῆς Βακτριανῶν ἀρχῆς. The same argumentation will have been presented by the Parthians.

⁴⁷ Just. 41.5.1–2.

⁴⁸ Just. 41.4.9. Compare Wenghofer in this volume.

⁴⁹ Compare Coşkun this volume for an earlier date (before 246) for Seleukos II's campaign against the Parthians.

⁵⁰ Just. 41.4.9 f.; cf. Wolski 1947, 68.

⁵¹ The details of a possible Parthian expansion between Seleukos II and Antiochos III are difficult to assess. An occupation of Hyrkania after Seleukos II (Wolski 1947, 62) is debatable: Polyb. 10.29 and 48.8 suggests Hyrkania was part of the Parthian zone of influence, but this was already the case since before Seleukos II's campaign (Just. 41.4.8: *Non magno deinde post tempore Hyrcanorum quoque regnum occupavit*) and due to the fact that Hyrkania was part of the satrapy of Parthia at the time of Andragoras (*SEG* 20,325). Similarly, it is not at all clear from Strabo 11.9 that the occupation of Choarene and Komisene dates from before Antiochos III (Schmitt 1964, 51 and 64). Compare Strootman this volume.

⁵² Why then did Antiochos III declare war on the Parthians? There are two possibilities: either, the Parthians broke the treaty with Seleukos II after his death, perhaps even backing Molon and Alexandros, or, as Antiochos III only began his anabasis after the death of Arsakes I in 211, he felt perhaps bound by the treaty

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concluded between Seleukos II and the Parthian ruler, rendered invalid, in typical hellenistic fashion, at the latter's death. This hypothesis would explain why Antiochos III attacked the Parthians around 209, whereas troops from the Dahae still fought for the king at Raphia in 217 (Polyb. 5.79.3), though it has also been supposed (Walbank 1957, 607) that the troops came from a (Seleukid) part of Hyrkania or were simply mercenaries or enemies of the Parthians (Schmitt 1964, 64). See also Engels 2014.

⁵³ Cf., in addition to Sellwood 1980, Alram 1998. See also Sellwood 1983.

⁵⁴ Cf. the plural used in Polyb. 11.34.15. Concerning the details of the treaty (Just. 41.5.7), cf. Bengtson 1952, Schmitt 1964, 63 f.; Engels 2014.

⁵⁵ Public talk by A. D. H. Bivar at the 10th international numismatic congress, London 1986, cited by Klose and Möseler 2008, 39 n. 136; Alram 1987; Boyce and Grenet 1991, 114 n. 246.

⁵⁶ Klose and Möseler 2008, 27.

⁵⁷ Compare Alram 1987.

⁵⁸ Compare Folmer 1995, p. 259–324.

⁵⁹ As to the debate whether the Aramaic legend of the Frataraka coins was read in the Persian language (the use of Aramaic words would then have been heterograph) or still in Aramaic, cf. Wieschöfer 1994, 107. Another example of the many difficulties imposed by the late- and post-Achaemenid use of Aramaic for the notation of the Persian language is the inscription on the tomb of Dareios at Naqsh-e Rostam; cf. Frye 1982, 85–90. In any case, the presence of technical terms like *κάρανος* or *frataraka* shows that the reader must have been aware that some words had to be read in Persian, not in Aramaic, making it possible for him to decipher the word correctly.

⁶⁰ Further occurrences in Bartholomae 1904, 1353. It was only after the completion of this manuscript that I was able to consult Shayegan 2011, who proposes a somewhat similar reading of the undeciphered words (*wbbrz wnt ZY krm*), also referring to the notion of 'victory'. However, Shayegan offers no convincing explanation of the place of *krm* within the *zy*-construction and analyses it as a simple apposition, translating (p. 170): 'Wahbarz was/may be victorious, (he) who (is) the commander [the *κάρανος*]'.


⁶¹ Cf. Klose and Möseler 2008, 34 concerning the coins of Ardashir, Vahbarz's predecessor: 'Der Ardashir-Name wird häufig mit vertauschten, retrograd gesetzten Buchstaben geschrieben, einzelne werden ausgelassen.'

⁶² Cf., for the other attestations of the words, Bartholomae 1904, 1354 and 1846.

⁶³ The possibility cannot be ruled out that the elusive signs refer to another personal name. As the name of the dynast himself is already present, as frequently in Frataraka coins, on the left side, the reader would have immediately identified the *κάρανος* on the right side and the unidentified word on the bottom as a status constructus, meaning 'κάρανος (of the) X'. But to resolve the puzzle of this X, further investigations into Persian onomastics or administrative terminology would be necessary.

⁶⁴ Strabo 11.14.5 and 15.

⁶⁵ Klose and Möseler 2008, 29: 'Unserer Überzeugung nach imitiert Vahbarz

Iranian identity and Seleukid allegiance

mit diesem auf den Münzen der Frataraka einzigartigen Zusatz die Siegesprägungen Seleukos' I. aus Susa und aus Persepolis [...]. Sichtbar wird hier auf jeden Fall das fortgesetzte Streben des Statthalters zu Persepolis mit seiner wahrscheinlich vorhandenen iranischen Gefolgschaft nach einer verstärkten Emanzipation vom seleukidischen Königshaus.'

⁶⁶ Houghton and Lorber 2002, 94 f., n° 241–243. However, it should be noted that the monogram may have been used by a mint master continuing his office even under Frataraka rule, as a similar case of identical monograms used on coins issued first by one, then by the next ruler is attested e.g. in Soloi in Cilicia, passing in 197 from Ptolemy V to Antiochos III. See Lorber and Kovacs 1997, 82–99.

⁶⁷ Polyaen. 4.15. See the relevant chapter in Engels 2017.

⁶⁸ For a thorough re-evaluation of the traditional chronology, see the contribution by A. Coşkun in this volume.

⁶⁹ Just. 41.4. For a different version of this chronology see Strootman in this volume.

⁷⁰ Trogus, *Prol.* 41; Iust. 41.4–5; Strabo 11.9.2. Cf. now Coloru 2009.

⁷¹ Just. 41.4.

⁷² Sherwin-White and Kuhrt 1993, 72 f.

⁷³ This road was later used by Antiochos III during his return from his anabasis (Polyb. 11.34.13 f.); cf. also Engels 2014.

⁷⁴ *BCHP* 11.

⁷⁵ *OGIS* 54.

⁷⁶ Porphyrios, *FGrH* 260, F 43; Val. Max 9.14 ext. 1 and 9.10 ext. 1; Polyaen. 8.50; App., *Syr.* 65.345; Just. 27.1.2.

⁷⁷ Compare now Grainger 2010 and Coşkun this volume.

⁷⁸ Klose and Müseler 2008, 28 f. refer e.g. to the seals (ill. 5.5. and 5.6.) depicted in Boardman 2000, representing the killing of an Egyptian king and of a (completely nude) Greek soldier, and, most striking, to a funerary relief from Limyra from around 360 BC: Borchardt, Schulz and Neumann 1985.

⁷⁹ Klose and Müseler 2008, 27: 'Persien in Gestalt eines Mannes in der Tracht der ehemaligen achaimenidischen Großkönige besiegt – selbstverständlich zum Ruhm der Götter – den griechischen "Erbfeind".'

⁸⁰ Wiesehöfer 1994, 129 and 2010, 114.

⁸¹ Cf. e.g. Klose and Müseler 2008, 27: 'Am Boden kniet hier eine männliche Gestalt in der Halbrüstung des griechischen bzw. makedonischen Hopliten, ohne Waffen und ohne Helm, aber mit dem typischen großen Rundschild.'

⁸² I have to thank Panagiotis Iossif for drawing my attention to this parallel and refer the reader to his forthcoming study *Stabbing the Enemy. 'Oriental' and 'Greek' Ways of Killing the Enemy*. Cf. in general also von Graeve 1970.

⁸³ *BCHP* 11 (BM 34428), l. 6–15.

⁸⁴ Cf. Briant 1994. The term thus also appears in the Dynastic prophecy (Grayson 1975a, 28 f. and 30–36; see now Neujahr 2005) and in numerous other historical texts, even describing, as in Sachs and Hunger 1988, 211, the confrontation between the (Greek and Macedonian) troops of Peithon and the (Greek and Macedonian) colonists from Baktria wanting to leave their new homes in 323.

⁸⁵ Cf. Funck 1996, 200–207.

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⁸⁶ Cf. Winnicki 1991.

⁸⁷ Cf. Kienitz 1953, 136–139.

⁸⁸ Cf. the satrapal stele at Cairo from 311, published in Sethe 1904, 11–22.

⁸⁹ Diod. 1.46.49; Hieron., *Comm. Dan.* 11.7.9.

⁹⁰ CGC 22183, dated between 280 and 274 and referring to the First Syrian War, if ‘Prstt’ means Palestine: Bernard 1990b, 535 f.; Sherwin-White and Kuhrt 1993, 35 f.

⁹¹ Athen. 201e; cf. also Rice 1983; Foertmeyer 1988; Hazzard 2000, 59–79.

⁹² *Papyrus Gurob*, publ. in *P. Petr.* II 45; III 144.

⁹³ Cf. Funck 1996, 202–205.

⁹⁴ Cf. *OGIS* 54. Cf. similarly the letter to Aristes, where the Achaemenids are held responsible for injuries done to the Jews and contrasted with the Ptolemies’ generous tolerance. Very probably, this was also part of the propaganda fed to the native Egyptian troops who were trained in the Macedonian way in order to fight the Seleukid troops at Raphia – a dangerous idea, as the confidence gained by the Egyptian troops triggered a rebellion and the creation of a competing Egyptian kingdom under the pharaohs Hugronaphor and Ankhmakis that was to last for 20 years (207–186); cf. Polyb. 5.65; 79–87.

⁹⁵ *Pithom Stele II* (Bertrand 1992, 197–201).

⁹⁶ Cf. Houghton and Lorber 2002, 233.

⁹⁷ Cairo 50048 = 47806. Cf. e.g. Stanwick 2002; Ma 2003, 189 f.

⁹⁸ Cf. Müller-Wollermann 2009.

⁹⁹ Houghton and Lorber 2002, 71 with n° 173.1 and 173.14. Cf. also Iossif 2004, identifying the shield depicted on the coin as an Antigonid one.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Salzmann 1980.

¹⁰¹ Houghton and Lorber 2002, n° 767 f. Cf. now Iossif 2012.

¹⁰² I cannot follow the elaborate argument of Shayegan 2011, 152–168 concerning a hypothetical link between this obscure episode and the even more obscure passage in *Hamzae Ispahanensis Annalium* 108 f. = 137 (*Ita Sacht terris Cenditarum et Hadharamaut et locis adiacentibus diu imperavit nescio tamen quo tempore ac rege deus melius nouit*) which Shayegan, based on Blau 1873, 331 n. 2, not only identifies with Sagdodonacus, father of Hyspaosines from Charax (Pliny 6.139: *Spaosines Sogdodonaci filius*), but also sees as a ‘margrave’ instituted by Vahbarz and defeated by Noumenios, thus allegedly adding an argument to the ‘conflictual’ model.

¹⁰³ Will 1982, 64.

¹⁰⁴ Polyb. 13.9.4–5.

¹⁰⁵ Polyb. 11.34.13.

¹⁰⁶ Bengtson 1964 (vol. 2), 145; Tarn 1951, 213 f. and 482 f.

¹⁰⁷ Schmitt 1964, 49; Mittag 2006, 305. Mørkholm 1966, 169 even refers to Antiochos V.

¹⁰⁸ Engels 2013.

¹⁰⁹ *OGIS* 229 (= I Magnesia-ad-Sipylos, 1 = Austin 182).