

## The Persian Alexander: The Numismatic Portraiture of the Pontic Dynasty

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 2013

**Abstract:** *Hellenistic coinage is a popular topic in art historical research as it is an invaluable resource of information about the political relationship between Greek rulers and their subjects. However, most scholars have focused on the wealthier and more famous dynasties of the Ptolemies and the Seleucids. Thus, there have been considerably fewer studies done on the artistic styles of the coins of the smaller outlying Hellenistic kingdoms. This paper analyzes the numismatic portraiture of the kings of Pontus, a peripheral kingdom located in northern Anatolia along the shores of the Black Sea. In order to evaluate the degree of similarity or difference in the Pontic kings' modes of representation in relation to the traditional royal Hellenistic style, their coinage is compared to the numismatic depictions of Alexander the Great of Macedon. A careful art historical analysis reveals that Pontic portrait styles correlate with the individual political motivations and historical circumstances of each king. Pontic rulers actively choose to diverge from or emulate the royal Hellenistic portrait style with the intention of either gaining support from their Anatolian and Persian subjects or being accepted as legitimate Greek sovereigns within the context of international politics. Overall, this paper illustrates how widely-circulating royal images are purposefully utilized and manipulated to advance the Hellenistic rulers' political ambitions.*

Heroic, invincible, and godly: these are terms used to this day to describe Alexander the Great of Macedon and his vast territorial conquests. However, despite his legendary achievements, his empire was swiftly carved up by regional dynasties that incessantly vied for dominion of the Mediterranean world. Yet Alexander's legacy lived on through his innumerable depictions in statuary, paintings, and coins. His visage literally became "a symbol of invincibility and world empire"<sup>1</sup> which was reduplicated, modified, and adapted continuously by the rulers who wished to partake in the success and glory of the young king.

This paper analyzes the numismatic portraiture of several of the kings of Pontus (Mithridates III, Pharnakes I, Mithridates IV, and Mithridates VI Eupator) in comparison to each other and to the portraiture of Alexander. I begin by assessing the art historical significance of Alexander's coinage and continue by discussing each Pontic ruler's depictions individually. The stylistic similarities and differences in the royally minted coins illuminate the manner in which the kings of the Pontic dynasty combine Hellenizing and Orientalizing elements in varying ways to present individualizing images of themselves that reflect and advance their personal political ambitions.

For his silver tetradrachms (Pl.I,1), Alexander adopted the image of the head of Herakles, a motif that he inherited from his father, Philip II of Macedon.<sup>2</sup> The choice to depict the mythological hero was appropriate in two ways. First, the member of the royal house of Macedon claimed to be descended from Herakles. Moreover, Herakles can be seen as a "prototype" for Alexander considering his status as a conqueror amongst men and a hero who defeated the barbaric forces of the east and brought glory to Greece.<sup>3</sup> As Pollitt suggests, through his countless accomplishments and his gradual ascent to power, Alexander may have started to consider himself as not only the descendent of the mythical hero, but as the new Herakles of his

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<sup>1</sup> A. B. Bosworth, "Alexander the Great and the Creation of the Hellenistic Age," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Hellenistic World*, ed. Glenn R. Bugh (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 23.

<sup>2</sup> Ian Carradice and M. Jessop Price, *Coinage in the Greek World* (London: Seaby, 1988), 107.

<sup>3</sup> J. J. Pollitt, *Art in the Hellenistic Age* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 25.

age.<sup>4</sup> This close allegorical association is embodied in later numismatic depictions of Alexander whose portraiture closely resembles that of his mythic ancestor.

The recent discovery of a gold daric coin from Mir Zakha (Pl.1,2) may be the only example of coinage minted during the life of Alexander which carries his image.<sup>5</sup> The profile head, which assumes different external attributes than those found on the Herakles coins, has remarkably similar facial features: they are both depicted with a bulging forehead, a robust yet slightly crooked nose, high cheekbones, a powerful jaw, and a sulky tight-lipped mouth. The Mir Zakha Alexander wears an elephant-skin helmet, a symbol of super-human might, and the *aegis* of Zeus, which is associated with heavenly protection. Although it is difficult to ascertain, there is a curving protrusion that peaks out from directly underneath the start of the elephant's tusk which may be the horns of Ammon, another characteristic of divinity. By adorning himself in multiple divine attributes, Alexander lifted himself to the status of a god amongst men.

After his death in 323 B.C., Alexander's image was taken up by his successors to be both reproduced and emulated for centuries. His likeness to Herakles became more standardized and eventually, such as on the Macedonian coinage of King Phillip III Arrhidaeus, the familiar portrait of Herakles came to be identified as Alexander himself.<sup>6</sup> Other Diadochoi such as Lysimachos of Thrace, who gained control of Thrace and the Black Sea region and proclaimed himself king in 306/5 B.C., minted coins of Alexander which accentuate his divine attributes (Pl.1,3). Lysimachos's tetradrachms crown his predecessor with the royal diadem and endow him with the exquisite ribbed horns of Zeus Ammon. The facial features, especially the bulging forehead, the strong jawline, and tight-lipped mouth continue from the previous examples. However, the expression of Lysimachos' Alexander is slightly softened; his concentrated, brooding eyes melt into a more poignant and eager gaze.

On the other hand, the depiction of Alexander on the early coinage of Ptolemy I Soter of Egypt (Pl.1,4) recalls the iconography of the Mir Zakha coin. In addition to the elephant skin and the *aegis*, this Alexander is also adorned with the more evident horns of Zeus Ammon and with the royal diadem, which peeks out from under his curling locks of hair. This Alexander is far more idealized, as the harsh, aggressive features of the Herakles and the Mir Zakha types gives way to a softened yet familiarly haughty expression, which Stewart describes as a "thrusting, visionary Alexander."<sup>7</sup> His sulky mouth remains in a grave thin-lipped frown and his eyes gaze upward toward the heavens, an expression reminiscent of the epigram inscribed on one of Lysippos's Alexander statues which proclaims, "I place the earth under my sway; you, O Zeus, keep Olympos."<sup>8</sup>

From the Greek imperial tradition, which arose out of the vacuum left behind after Alexander the Great's death, the kings of Pontus carved out a kingdom for themselves in northern Anatolia. Despite the existence of some Greek cultural influences beginning with the influx of Greek colonists in the 7<sup>th</sup> century B.C., at the time Pontus was established the Black Sea region was inhabited not by Greeks but mainly by native people, including those of strong

<sup>4</sup> Pollitt, *Art in the Hellenistic Age*, 26.

<sup>5</sup> Osmund Bopearachchi and Philippe Flandrin, *Le Portrait d'Alexandre Le Grand: Histoire D'une Découverte Pour L'humanité* (Monaco: Éditions du Rocher, 2005).

<sup>6</sup> Andrew Stewart, "Alexander in Greek and Roman Art," in *Brill's Companion to Alexander the Great*, ed. J. Roisman. (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2003), 46.

<sup>7</sup> Stewart, *Alexander*, 50.

<sup>8</sup> Plutarch, *De Alexandri Magna Fortuna aut Virtute*, 2.2.3, as found in Pollitt *Art in the Hellenistic Age*, 20.

Anatolian, Iranian and Persian backgrounds.<sup>9</sup> The landscape was dominated by independent fortresses, peasant communities, and rural agricultural land rather than by unified Greek cities, and the political organization of the region resembled a feudal system of serfs and landholders. However, especially with the establishment of the Pontic dynasty, the landed aristocracy aspired towards greater Hellenism. Despite their Persian heritage, the first kings of Pontus embraced Greek titles and standards of kingship.<sup>10</sup>

This adoption of Greek traditions showed up most clearly in the minting of royal coinage, a unifying element that did not exist prior to the 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C. However, Callataÿ observes that royal tetradrachms minted before the reign of Mithridates VI Eupator are very rare today, even in Pontus, and that the amount must not have been particularly substantial in historical times either. He suggests that this coinage was not internally circulated but used instead for military purposes: to pay mercenaries, fund campaigns, etc. Moreover, he advises scholars not to put too much weight in the “propagandistic value of their iconography” because of this restriction of circulation.<sup>11</sup> The coins did have an audience beyond the laypeople of the Pontic region: hired mercenaries and soldiers, as well as the surrounding kingdoms. Therefore the coinage of Pontus would have had important propagandistic purposes: to purposefully broadcast a certain image of the king to his soldiers, his enemies, and the rest of the Hellenistic world.

The first king of the Pontic region was Mithridates I Ctistes, who founded the kingdom in 302 B.C. After crowning himself king, he issued the kingdom’s first official royal coinage in the form of gold staters with the head of Athena on one side and a standing Nike on the reverse. These coins mimicked those of Alexander and thus followed the general trends of the Hellenistic world.<sup>12</sup> However, it was not until the reign of Mithridates III that the royal portrait appeared on the obverse of royally minted currency (Pl.2,1-2).

Mithridates III ruled from approximately 220 B.C. to 185 B.C.<sup>13</sup> Although examples of his coinage exist, the full history of his reign is unknown.<sup>14</sup> It is thought that he attempted yet ultimately failed to capture Sinope in 220 B.C.<sup>15</sup> His portraiture drastically diverges from that of Alexander’s in practically all but the king’s royal diadem which crowns his head, now a universal symbol of kingship. The profile head is distinguished by a style which Pollitt describes as “unrestrained realism” in which Alexander’s youthful and virile features give way to a more mature, uncompromising and individualizing visage.<sup>16</sup> Mithridates III is depicted as having a rather prognathic profile, a large wrinkled forehead, massive arching brows, a protruding snub nose, a small chin, and enormous ears. The severity of his expression is heightened by his grim

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<sup>9</sup> Alfred Leo Duggan, *King of Pontus; the Life of Mithradates Eupator* (New York: Coward-McCann, 1959), 15. Although Alfred Duggan’s biography of Mithridates VI is somewhat outdated and romanticized, it gives a fairly good account of the background of the region of Pontus.

<sup>10</sup> C. Marek, “Hellenisation and Romanisation in Pontos-Bithynia: An Overview,” in *Mithridates VI and the Pontic Kingdom*, ed. Jakob Munk Højte, 35–45, (Oakville, CT: Aarhus University Press, 2009), 35.

<sup>11</sup> François de Callataÿ, “The First Royal Coinages of Pontus (from Mithradates III to Mithradates V),” in *Mithridates VI and the Pontic Kingdom*, ed. Jakob Munk Højte, 63–94 (Oakville, CT: Aarhus University Press, 2009), 64, 84–88.

<sup>12</sup> Deniz Burcu Erciyas, “Studies in the Archaeology of Hellenistic Pontus: The Settlements, Monuments, and Coinage of Mithridates VI and His Predecessors” (PhD thesis, University of Cincinnati, 2001), 78, 165.

<sup>13</sup> Otto Mørkholm, *Early Hellenistic Coinage from the Accession of Alexander to the Peace of Apamea (336-188 B.C.)*, ed. Philip Grierson and Ulla Westermark (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 193. The dates used for the reigns of the kings of Pontus are taken from the chronology established by Mørkholm.

<sup>14</sup> Erciyas, *Studies*, 80.

<sup>15</sup> Callataÿ, *First Royal Coinages*, 80.

<sup>16</sup> Pollitt, *Art in the Hellenistic Age*, 71.

thin-lipped frown and the abundance of wrinkles which line his eyes, mouth, and neck. Unlike the large tousled hairstyle of Alexander, Mithradates III sports rather short hair with some versions of his coinage even depicting him with a stylized spiraling hairstyle made up of small tightly-wound curls. His scruffy side burns and the stylized tassels of his diadem further contribute to his Persian appearance.

Erciyas affirms that this degree of realism in Mithradates's portraiture is unlike other representations of Hellenistic kings. She argues that this divergence from the standard stylistic mode of representing the royal image suggests that Mithradates III "felt more confident with his control over his kingdom" and thus did not see the need to align his image with the Greek format.<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, Pollitt and Mørkholm attribute the Pontic ruler's oriental appearance to the Pontic kingdom's Anatolian and Iranian origins. Pollitt argues that "although the royal courts aspired to a certain standard of Hellenism" the majority of the population and a large portion of the elite class were of native eastern descent. Accordingly, the idealizing boyish-hero Alexander type would not have been well received. By choosing to present himself with more Asiatic features, Mithradates III evoked the glories of his apparent Persian lineage in order to appeal to the demographics of his kingdom.<sup>18</sup>

However, it is interesting that despite Mørkholm's insistence that the "semi-barbarian royal portraits" of the Pontic kings have "no real parallel in Hellenistic portraiture," there are a few remarkable similarities between the method in which Mithradates III chose to represent himself and that of the great Macedonian king Lysimachos, who conquered the east in the previous century (Pl.1,3). The overall format of the coins is no different: the king faces to the right and looks out into the distance with a powerful, aspiring gaze. The diadem in his hair marks him as a Hellenistic king and consequentially ties him to the glories of his political predecessor and to the traditions of the Greek Hellenistic world. Thus, through the combination of standard Hellenizing attributes and his harsh and realistic facial features, Mithradates III fuses two distinct portrait styles into a hybrid image that evokes both his hardy eastern pedigree as well as his status as a political descendent of Alexander and a competent Hellenistic monarch.

The succeeding Pontic king, Pharnakes I (c. 185-170 B.C.), was incredibly ambitious and took aggressive steps to expand his territory through both diplomacy and military action. He was the first king of his dynasty to send envoys to Rome and he managed to establish friendly relations with major Hellenistic cities along the coast of the Black Sea as well as in the west. Moreover, he invaded Galatia and set his sights on Cappadocia, a region that would continue to evade Pontic control for the rest of the kingdom's history.<sup>19</sup>

The numismatic depictions of Pharnakes I (Pl.2,3-5) are somewhat reminiscent of his predecessor's with a few significant alterations. Pharnakes borrowed Mithradates III's brutally realistic portrait style, which emphasize the king's eastern roots: most notably the sideburns and the heavy-set brow, protruding nose, large ears and slightly stylized hair. However, the large open eyes, slightly smiling mouth, smooth skin and defined musculature of the neck produce an image of a physically strong, virile, and aggressive ruler which contrasts starkly with the flabby, aging visage of his father. The thrusting expression and his youthful yet hardened features are akin to those of Alexander, whose posthumous coins (Pl.1,3-4) were circulating contemporaneously within the Black Sea region.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Erciyas, *Studies*, 80.

<sup>18</sup> Pollitt, *Art in the Hellenistic Age*, 71; Mørkholm, *Early Hellenistic Coinage*, 131.

<sup>19</sup> Erciyas, *Studies*, 80-81.

<sup>20</sup> Carradice and Price 1988, 127.

The aggressive features evident in the portraiture of Pharnakes I correspond to our understanding of the history of his reign. Considering his expansionist agenda, it is not surprising that the coins used to pay his army depict the king as a strong and weathered man in his prime. First, his image suggests that he is a capable leader who is both physically fit and experienced enough to lead an army and to rule over a kingdom that is gaining prominence on the international stage. Moreover, by portraying himself with more youthful features and the hard gaze reminiscent of Alexander, Pharnakes evokes the military genius, strength, and ambition of the great Macedonian king. On the other hand, he retained the hardened, realistic features of his father. This unapologetic allusion to the east indicates that Pharnakes proudly proclaimed his Iranian descent and recalled the military strength of his supposed ancestors, the Persian kings.

The brother of Pharnakes I, Mithridates IV Philopator (c. 170-150 B.C.) succeeded to the throne after his brother's death.<sup>21</sup> Little is known about the history of his reign save for his diplomatic attempts to befriend Rome and that he partly shared his reign with his sister/wife Laodice.<sup>22</sup> Interestingly, Mithridates IV minted coins featuring portraits of himself and Laodice in the 'jugate' portrait style (Pl.3,4) which was first introduced by Ptolemy II of Egypt in the early third century B.C.<sup>23</sup> This coin type utilizes the same portraiture of the king and superimposes it upon the portrait head of the queen, in order that the two heads line up with one other within the same scene.

In general, the coinage of Mithridates IV (Pl.3,1-3) varies considerably in its representation of the king. Nevertheless, he tends to be depicted with similar features as the previous kings of his dynasty, albeit subdued somewhat. For example, he adopted the despondent, thick-lipped frown, deep-set eyes and fleshy face and neck of Mithridates III, and the smooth, wrinkleless skin of Pharnakes I. On a number of coins (Pl.3,1-2), he is depicted with thick Orientalizing sideburns but the majority of the portrait heads (Pl.3,3) diminish the presence of facial hair to the point that it is hardly discernible at all. Despite the many references to his Persian heritage, the king brought in elements of the more idealizing style more common to the western Hellenistic kingdoms and to the original portraiture of Alexander. His puffy and somewhat drooping eyes and the soft contours of his nose and mouth soften his expression and make him seem less physically threatening than his predecessor.

Erciyas argues that the greater use of a Hellenistic style and the repression of his Persian features is part of Mithridates IV's diplomatic strategy to portray himself as a more peaceful king than his brother in order to procure favor with the Romans.<sup>24</sup> By depicting himself with softer facial features than his predecessors, he attempted to integrate himself and his kingdom into the broader context of Hellenistic culture and iconography. His use of the jugate portrait type is especially significant as it ties the ruler to the greater stylistic tradition established by the Ptolemaic dynasty. By utilizing the existing Hellenistic iconographical type, Mithridates IV acceded to the Greek standard as a means to gain acceptance and recognition on the international level.

The most well-known and well-documented king of the Pontic Dynasty is Mithridates VI Eupator, who came to power in 120 B.C. From the very beginning of his reign, Mithridates VI belligerently expanded his empire in the pretense of protecting Greek culture and civilization from domination by 'barbaric' people such as the Scythians in the north and, eventually, the

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<sup>21</sup> Mørkholm 1991, 175.

<sup>22</sup> Erciyas 2006, 16.

<sup>23</sup> Carradice and Price, *Coinage*, 123.

<sup>24</sup> Erciyas, *Studies*, 82.

Romans from the west. After taking command of the whole of the Black Sea region including the Bosporan kingdom, he attempted to secure control of Cappadocia, which attracted the attention of Rome and launched the first wars between Mithridates VI and Rome in 89 B.C. In 88 B.C., the Pontic king established himself in Asia Minor and continued to challenge Rome in the west. Ruthless in his attack on Rome, he ordered the execution of over 80,000 Roman people that same year. After suffering crippling defeats by the Roman general Sulla and dealing with revolts in Pontus, he was pushed back out of Greece and forced into a peace agreement in 85 B.C. In the last twenty years of his life, Mithridates VI continued to attempt to rise up against the Romans with little success.<sup>25</sup> In order to fund his extensive military campaigns, Mithridates VI struck ten to twenty times as many coins as his predecessors.<sup>26</sup> It is to these coins that we now turn.

The portraiture of Mithridates VI departs wildly from that of the realistic style adopted by the majority of the kings of his dynasty. His idealizing style is also found in a less refined form on the tetradrachms minted by his father, Mithridates V Euergetes (Pl.3,5) who ruled from c. 150 - 120 B.C.<sup>27</sup> Unfortunately, his coinage was not very abundant and few examples survive today.<sup>28</sup> Overall, it is difficult to discern any contributing elements of his predecessors' hard-boiled realistic style in the royal portraiture of Mithridates VI, as it leaned toward a softer idealizing style from the very beginning of his reign. Højte identifies two distinct portrait types in his silver tetradrachms: the earlier type was produced from the year 106 B.C. and was succeeded by the second type in the year 85 B.C. after his defeat in the First Mithridatic War.<sup>29</sup>

The earlier mints (Pl.4,1) leaned toward more veristic and older representation of the individual. The profile head of Mithridates VI on the early silver tetradrachms exhibits harsher and more pronounced facial features slightly reminiscent of those of the other Pontic kings: the large nose, robust brow, heavy-set mouth amid creases, and weak chin of his predecessors. On some coins, his hair curls down across his chin, creating the appearance of side burns. However, the coins largely follow the typical royal Hellenistic iconography of the period, which is most visible in the rendering of the hair. His curling stylized locks are particularly similar to the depiction of Alexander's hairstyle on the silver tetradrachms of Lysimachos (Pl.1,3). Interestingly, he adopted Alexander's signature *anastole* which is not commonly found in the representations of other Diadochoi.

The second type (Pl.4,2-5) represents the king in an incredibly idealized style. The eastern realistic elements common to the portraiture of his dynasty all but disappear; instead, Mithridates VI is represented as a smooth-skinned youth with the heroic allure and melting facial features of Alexander the Great. His small eyes are half-closed and framed by thin straight eyebrows; he gazes straight ahead with a placid expression of eternal longing. His curving lips, which resemble those of Alexander, curl up into a slight smile below his large and rounded Mithridatic nose. His face is soft and free of wrinkles, giving him a romanticized, youthful appearance. Alexander's *anastole* is present once again; both it and the royal diadem are lost within his long, flowing locks of hair, which appear to be blowing in the wind.

<sup>25</sup> Deniz Burcu Erciyas, *Wealth, Aristocracy and Royal Propaganda Under the Hellenistic Kingdom of the Mithradatids in the Central Black Sea Region in Turkey*, *Colloquia Pontica* 12 (Leiden ; Boston: Brill, 2006), 17-28.

<sup>26</sup> Callataÿ, *First Royal Coinages*, 85, 88.

<sup>27</sup> Erciyas, *Studies*, 169.

<sup>28</sup> Callataÿ, *First Royal Coinages*, 65, 84-7.

<sup>29</sup> Jakob Munk Højte, "Portraits and Statues of Mithridates VI," in *Mithridates VI and the Pontic Kingdom*, ed. Jakob Munk Højte, 145-62 (Oakville, CT: Aarhus University Press, 2009), 148.

Overall, the king's coins embraced the iconic portraiture style of Alexander and presented Mithridates VI in the guise of the great Macedonian king. Price argues that he may have been modeling himself after Dionysos in his later mints because of the soft and youthful rendering of the face and the long waving hairstyle.<sup>30</sup> This idea is possible considering that it was common for Hellenistic rulers to assume the attributes of the gods. Even so, both the *anastole*, which rarely shows up in standard Hellenistic royal coinage, and the idealized portraiture style link the Pontic king most closely with Alexander.

Mithridates VI's purposeful adoption of a numismatic portrait type familiar to the Hellenized Greek world may have had economic motivations. Carradice states that "the need for acceptability" can lead to intentional mimicking of a design of a "particularly respected coinage."<sup>31</sup> In this case, the iconography of the Pontic king's tetradrachms may have been purposely appropriated from the coinage of other Diadochoi (such as Lysimachos) and the posthumous imperial coins of Alexander, in order to enhance the credibility of his own coinage in times of war and instability.

Moreover, considering the king's ambition and aggressive policy of expansionism, it is possible that Mithridates VI regarded himself as a "second Alexander, ready to conquer the world."<sup>32</sup> However, by looking at the minted tetradrachms, it is difficult to conceive of the ruler as the brutal, merciless, and somewhat genocidal king described in historical texts. This specificity in pictorial representation emphasizes the propagandistic nature of these mints. Similarly to his predecessors, the amount of strikes produced by Mithridates VI increased significantly when preparing for war; hence, these coins would have been viewed mainly by the soldiers who were paid to fight for the king.<sup>33</sup> Rather than presenting him as a selfish and ruthless aggressor bent on world domination, the coins portray him as a beautiful, smiling boy-hero, the typical Alexander. By invoking the imagery of this great ruler, such iconography would have served to garner his soldier's loyalty and respect.

Thus, the second type focused on portraying Mithridates VI as a champion of Greek culture and civilization. In order to clearly broadcast this propagandistic message to his soldiers and to his potential allies, he aligned his image style with that of Alexander. By donning the signature *anastole* and the idealizing features of the Macedonian king, Mithridates VI sent a clear message to the Hellenistic world: just as Alexander pushed the Persian invaders out of Greece, he will liberate the Greeks from oppression by the Romans.<sup>34</sup>

Simultaneously, Mithridates VI supplemented this strategy by distancing himself from the eastern portrait styles of his predecessors. Although the earlier type retained the gruff realistic facial features of the rest of the Pontic kings, the second type diverged from this style almost entirely. This radical shift in pictorial representation may be explained by the ruler's desire to gain acceptance within the western Hellenistic world. As previously noted, his tetradrachms circulated mainly outside of Pontus and thus would have been seen by a Greek audience. Depicting the king with a familiar idealizing face rather than with foreign Persian or Iranian features would have bolstered the king's attempt at presenting himself as a defender of

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<sup>30</sup> M. J. Price, "Mithridates VI Eupator Dionysus and the Coinages of the Black Sea," *The Numismatic Chronicle* 8 (1968): 3-6. Refer to Price for the full argument; Højte, *Portraits and Statues*, 149. Højte also concedes to the possibility of some Dionysian influences in later mints.

<sup>31</sup> Carradice and Price, *Coinage*, 134.

<sup>32</sup> Erciyas, *Wealth*, 147.

<sup>33</sup> Price, *Mithridates VI Eupator*, 2-5.

<sup>34</sup> Højte, *Portraits and Statues*, 149.

refined Greek culture. Thus, his coins exemplify how artistic depictions on royally-minted coins were utilized as a widespread form of political propaganda.

All in all, this analysis of the numismatic portraiture of Pontic kings highlights the close relationship between visual representation and politics during the age of the Diadochoi. For instance, Mithridates VI's visage marks a sharp artistic divergence from that of his more locally-minded predecessors in an effort to strengthen his political standing with Greek peoples within the ever-changing political landscape of the greater Hellenistic world. Such stylistic disparities illustrate the tremendous variety with which each king choose to personalize his image in order to suit his distinct political agenda. Overall, these coins demonstrate how sovereigns of outlying Hellenistic kingdoms purposefully manipulated both eastern elements and the royal portrait style of Alexander the Great to create unique hybrid portraits that evoke both their local eastern origins and the glories of Alexander's vast empire.

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## List of Plates

- Pl. I 1. Coin. (Alexander the Great, 334-323 B.C., Head of Herakles/Zeus seated on throne) (*Sylloge Nummorum Graecorum Volume XIII. Newcastle Antiquaries Society 2005*).
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Plate I



1



2



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Plate II



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2



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4



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Plate III



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Plate IV



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