

Roy Arakelian

PhD

royarakelian@hotmail.com

NOTE ON THE CHRONOLOGY OF COINAGE ISSUED BY TIGRANES II*

Keywords: Tigranes, ΔHMO, Artaxiad dynasty, civic community, Tigranid era, Seleucid era, Pompeian era.

Introduction

Note relating to the presentation made at the international conference “The Source Study Value of the Coin” held in Yerevan, Armenia, on June 9-10, 2023.

Based on Arakelian Roy and Yevadian Maxime K., Study on the chronology of coinage issued by Tigranes II, “Journal of Ancient Civilizations”, 2023, Volume 38, pp. 21-57.

In the present study, a new timeline for coinage under Tigranes II is suggested on the basis of the most recent catalogue, published in 2016 (ACCP).

The classification proposed here results from a new hypothesis hitherto neglected. The thesis involves the granting of civic status to Artaxata after the defeat by Pompey in 66 BC. Based on this, it is possible to carry out a consistent classification, with four clearly distinct periods of the coinage minted by Tigranes II.

I. Fourth period: The abbreviation “ΔHMO”

Some letters or groups of letters occur with great frequency on a body of 12-coin types issued under Tigranes II, in particular “ΔHMO.”

ACCP:	94	95	96	97	143	144	148	149	152	155	156	157
	AE	AE	AE	AE	AE	AE	AE	AE	AR	AE	AE	AE

Fig. 1: Corpus of coins with the ΔHMO legend.

This abbreviation, omitting the flexional final letter, leads us to a reading of the word δῆμος meaning ‘people, civic community’, which, in our opinion, can only refer to the city of Artaxata. The existence of free-city status for the Armenian metropolis is hard to imagine and, until now, has not been well understood. Secure in his role and jealous of his power, it is highly doubtful that Tigranes II would have personally sought

* Received 31.07.2023, sent for review 01.08.2023, accepted for publication 01.11.2023.

to develop free civic communities in his own kingdom. However, Henri Seyrig (Seyrig 1950) once pointed out that three major cities were given their civic freedom during the reign of Tigranes II: Laodicea and Berytus received this in 81 BC, while the city of Apamea began issuing its own coins in 76/75 BC and ceased to issue coinage in 68/67 BC when the Romans invaded under Lucullus. In autumn 66 BC, Pompey was in a strong position and granted civic rights as a weapon against Tigranes in Syria and probably also in Armenia, in order to strengthen Roman rule and to encourage other cities to ask for a similar status. It should also be noted that during the confused period following the brutal imprisonment of Artavasdes II by Mark Antony (34 BC), when the Armenian throne remained vacant due to Roman occupation, civic coins were issued. In our opinion, these coins can only be a testament to a pre-existing civic structure.

The group containing the inscription “ΔΗΜΟ” has two main features. First, the king named Tigranes *always* bears the royal title (ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΤΙΓΡΑΝΟΥ), and *never* the imperial title (ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΝ ΤΙΓΡΑΝΟΥ). Secondly, the tiara *never* includes the two eagles on either side of a star but only a single star, which can sometimes be interpreted as having the trail of a shooting star and sometimes as a horn. Once we have identified the set of the 12 above-mentioned coin types with the ΔΗΜΟ legend, we can easily group them with all types of similar coins, including the same tiara.

ACCP:	128	129	130	131	132	133	138	139	141	142	145	146	147	153	154	158
	AR	AE	AE	AE	AE	AE	AE	AE	AE	AE	AE	AE	AE	AR	AR	AE

Fig. 2: Corpus of coins with single star and the royal title.

While sharing the features mentioned above, the next series stands out due to another feature, namely the inclusion of a date based on the Pompeian era in Armenia beginning in 66 BC, and not in 64 BC as in Syria (Seyrig 1950, 12-14).

ACCP:	145 ¹	146	147	148	149	[151] ²
	AE	AE	AE	AE	AE	[AE]
Date:	6, 7, or 10	7	7	7	8	[28 /8]

Fig. 3: Corpus of coins dated with Pompeian era.

So, the sixth, seventh, and eighth years correspond to the years 61, 60, and 59 BC respectively. This dating confirms the chronological coherence of the series with the period of Roman domination (66-55 BC).

We also suggest that specific coin types should be included in this group. While they

1 There is some discussion about the year written on this coin type. We have not been able to examine enough examples to confirm a reading.

2 We exclude from this series ACCP 151, introduced by F. Kovacs, who, due to the fact that the letter “K” (20) has been erased from the coin before the letter H (8), dates it from the 8th year in the Pompeian era. However, this coin should obviously be placed in the series from year 28, since it has the same features as ACCP 98, as well as a monogram closely resembling the series ACCP 98, 99, and 100.

have the features mentioned above, they also include the Tyche of Damascus and, in the case of three of them, a date on the reverse side corresponding to the Seleucid period.

ACCP:	134	135	136	137	140
	AR	AR	AR	AE	AE
Date:	242	243	244		
	(71/70)	(70/69)	(69/68)		

Fig. 4: Corpus of coins issued in Damascus and dated with the Seleucid era.

The coins were issued in Damascus after the victory of Tigranes II over the king of Nabataea, Aretas III, probably in 72 BC. From then on, and until the Romans’ arrival in autumn 69 BC, he issued a series of silver coins each year, dated according to the Seleucid era, as was the custom in Damascus. We can note that, *before* the beginning of the war with Lucullus, Tigranes II had removed the two imperial eagles from his tiara, probably with the aim of showing his commitment to peace with the Romans. We can also note that the royal title, “ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΤΙΓΡΑΝΟΥ,” was used on these coins.

II. Second period: Coins minted for military purposes

Many studies have shown that coins were mainly minted for military purposes (de Callataÿ 2016). So, it is not at all unlikely that some of the coins issued by Tigranes II were minted for military purposes. This hypothesis is supported by the fact that he was the first Artaxiad king to issue silver coins, which were the coins most used by mercenaries,³ although bronze coins were not excluded for military payments (Günther 2020, 179). Moreover, we know that his army was partially composed of mercenaries (de Callataÿ 2016, 46). Nonetheless, the Greater Armenian army was an integral part of the *nakhararut’yun* (սախարարություն), a dynastic reality that was specific to Armenia. It is during the first two periods of offensive wars prepared and undertaken by Tigranes II that one would expect to find dated coins corresponding to the payment of armies. The first war of annexation was waged against Sophene in 94 BC, the second against Cappadocia in 93 BC, and then, most importantly, large-scale wars of conquest against northern Mesopotamia and Syria, which lasted until 83 BC.

According to the most recent catalogue (ACCP), the dated coins issued by Tigranes II are distributed as follows:

Year:	28		33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40
	KH		ΓΛ	ΔΛ	ΕΛ	ϛΛ	ΖΛ	ΗΛ	ΘΛ	Μ
ACCP:	98		109	104	105	106	101	102	103	114
	AE		AE	AR	AR	AR	AR	AR	AR	AE
	99		115	110	111	122	107	112	108	120
	AE		AE	AE	AE	AE	AR	AE	AR	AE

3 Ibid., 389-415.

100 AE	121 AE	116 AE	117 AE	118 AE	113 AE
151 ⁴ AE					119 AE

Fig. 5: Corpus of coins dated with a Tigranid dynastic era.

We can see a first series of coins dated to the year 28, then a second series dated to the years 33 to 40. Classifying these coins according to the date of the beginning of the reign of Tigranes II (95 BC) seems unrealistic to us. This incoherence has already been noted by some authors, without them being able to explain it (de Callataj, 1997, 231 – 232. Duyrat 2012, 173). Dating the coins between 68 and 63-56 BC would be incoherent for several reasons. First of all, the payment of a large tribute of 6,000 talents after the defeat in 66 BC and following on from the pillaging of Tigranocerta’s treasury in 69 BC would have inevitably placed a heavy burden on the Armenian king’s treasury, making a new issuance of coins such as this quite improbable. Secondly, the Roman protectorate over Armenia no longer justified issuing coinage for offensive military purposes, and even less to finance new military campaigns. Lastly, it is hard to believe that coins featuring the imperial title (ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΝ ΤΙΓΡΑΝΟΥ) and the imperial tiara (with two eagles on either side of a star) would have been tolerated by the Romans after Tigranes II’s defeat. Even if it is accepted, based on Cassius Dio, that Tigranes recovered his title, “ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΝ ΤΙΓΡΑΝΟΥ” after Pompey’s intervention (Cass. Dio 37.6. Vardanian 1999, 44. Nercessian 2006, 148). In addition, the concentration in the last decade of his reign (66-55 BC) of most of the coins issued by the king would be historically unsustainable.

In fact, we think that the dated coins correspond, in all likelihood, to the preparations for the large-scale military campaigns led by Tigranes II. There is the period of war against Sophene in 94 BC and Cappadocia in 93 BC, as well as the period of war during the 80’s against the Parthians and their vassal states in northern Mesopotamia. Therefore, we are led to believe that this coinage dates from the wars at the beginning of his reign.

These observations lead us to look for another reference point for the date, which is more likely than the years of Tigranes II’s reign, which began in 95 BC. This reference point can be moved back to an earlier date, which inevitably falls in the reign of his father, Tigranes I. However, ascertaining the date of the beginning of Tigranes I’s reign is a genuine challenge. The sources concerning this king are rare in Graeco-Latin literature, and none of the texts allow us to determine an exact date. Since the relatively recent discoveries of Babylonian cuneiform diaries, it has been possible to date the beginning of Tigranes I’s reign to the year 122/121 BC.

We believe that the date inscribed on dated coins would be a Tigranid era, including not only the regnal years of Tigranes I but also the years since Tigranes II was crowned.

4 See above for the reasons why ACCP 151 is attributed to the year 28 of a Tigranid era.

Thus, we can understand why the latter maintained an attachment to this era, which was both a strong link to his father and an essential element in his legitimacy.

III. The third period: the imperial period

We must still analyse a final period between the end of the major conquests (dated coins) and those coins from the end of the reign (including the coins containing the letters ΔΗΜΟ). This period represents the high point of the reign, with the founding of the city of Tigranocerta in 80/79 BC and a period of relative peace, apart from the residual conquests in Syria (Damascus, Ptolemais, etc.) until the Roman attack in 69 BC. During this period, two types of titles continue to be used. To this period, we can attribute the two following series:

The series with the inscription “ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΤΙΓΡΑΝΟΥ”:

ACCP:	71	72	73	74	75	76	93
	AR	AR	AR	AR	AR	AR	AE

Fig. 6: Corpus of coins issued by Tigranes II with the royal title.

The series with the inscription “ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΝ ΤΙΓΡΑΝΟΥ”:

ACCP:	77	78	79	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	90	91	92
	AE	AE	AE	AE	AE	AE	AE	AE	AE	AE	AE	AE	AE	AE	AE	AE

Fig. 7: Corpus of coins issued by Tigranes II with the imperial title.

These coins have an obvious unity in terms of quality, style, and weight. The coins with the royal title “ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΤΙΓΡΑΝΟΥ” are made of silver, and they are mainly very well-made tetradrachms. The coins with the imperial title “ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΝ ΤΙΓΡΑΝΟΥ” are all made of bronze.

IV. The beginning of the reign: absence of standardisation

The early period of the reign of Tigranes II is fairly short, between his accession in 95 BC and the beginning of the conquests of the Parthian lands between 91 and 88 BC. However, it is still difficult to identify the coins of this period due to the lack of standardisation in legends, and due to the absence of ideological elements on the reverse. The earliest coins issued by Tigranes II are very similar – regarding the module, the shape of the tiara, decorated only with a star, and the bust – to the coinage issued by his father and seem to be directly inspired by it.

The imitation of coins from the previous reign confirms a normal dynastic succession, conveying a shared royal ideology. We can attribute the following types to this period:

ACCP:	54	55	56	57	58	59
	AE	AE	AE	AE	AE	AE

Fig. 8: Corpus of coins attributed to the reign of Tigranes I.

These coins were very probably the first ones issued by Tigranes II in the context of the divinisation of his father, Tigranes I, and the promotion of his worship. They all include the word “ΘΕΟΥ,” and the complete inscription is “ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΜΕΓΑΛΟΥ ΤΙΓΡΑΝΟΥ ΘΕΟΥ.”

Conclusion

In this study, we believe that we have established that the reign of Tigranes II should be divided into four periods, to each period of which we can attribute a homogeneous set of coins. The first and last periods present no major difficulties. The central, “imperial” period is also fairly easy to analyse, although many aspects still demand examination. The period of dated coins, which we suggest coincides with the period of Tigranes II's large-scale military campaigns, can be dated to the decade beginning in 80 BC.

The division of the reign into four distinct periods enables us to analyse variations in his coinage, which might otherwise seem erratic.

We noted that Tigranes II stands out through the use of three successive eras (Tigranid, Seleucid and Pompeian) in three particular contexts, none of which constitutes his regnal era.

It should also be noted the different types of tiara used by Tigranes. He is primarily known for a specific type of tiara with a star framed by two eagles. This tiara is the most often seen, but it is not the only one worn by the king, nor was it the dynastic tiara of the Artaxiads.

We can see on some coins a large star on his tiara and nothing else. Then come the coins from the “imperial” phase, covering two distinct monetary periods, during which the tiara includes a star framed by two eagles. The third and last phase corresponds to the period after the Pompeian reorganisation (66-55 BC), the coins are decorated with a star or perhaps a comet (or star and bull's horn). Thus, Tigranes II embodied each phase of his rule in different tiaras.

Ռոյ Առաքելյան

PhD

royarakelian@hotmail.com

ԱՎԿԱՐԿ ՏԻԳՐԱՆ II-Ի ԴԻԱՄԱԿԱՆ ԹՈՂԱՐԿՈՒՄՆԵՐԻ ԺԱՄԱՆԱԿԱԳՐՈՒԹՅԱՆ ՄԱՍԻՆ

Հիմնաբառեր. Տիգրան, ΔΗΜΟ, Արտաշեսյան տոհմ, քաղաքացիական համայնք, Տիգրանյանների տոմար, Սելևկյան տոմար, Պոմպեոսյան տոմար

Արտաշեսյան մեծ տիրակալի առանձնահատկություններից մեկն այն է, որ նրա դրամաթողարկումը կարծես թե զուրկ է հետևողականությունից: Սույն ուսումնասիրության մեջ դիտարկվում է Տիգրան II-ի դրամաթողարկման նոր պարբերակակա՝ նացումը՝ այդ խնդրի գլոբալ տեսլականի նոր ուրվագծով:

Առաջարկվող դասակարգումը հիմնված է նոր վարկածի վրա, որը դեռ պատշաճ ուշադրության չի արժանացել: Խոսքը մ.թ.ա. 66թ.-ին Պոմպեոսից կրած պար-

տությոնից հետո Արտաշատում քաղաքացիական համայնք ստեղծելու մասին է, որն արտացոլված է դրամների վրա՝ «ΔΗΜΟ» գրությամբ:

Այս վերլուծության հիման վրա Տիգրան II-ի դրամահատությունը կարելի է դասակարգել հատակորեն տարբերվող չորս փուլերի:

Մենք փորձել ենք ցույց տալ, որ յուրաքանչյուր փուլ ունեցել է իրեն հատուկ դրամային հայեցակարգը: Այսպիսով, նրա գահակալման տարիները կարող ենք բաժանել հետևյալ չորս ժամանակագրական հատվածների.

մ.թ.ա. 95-89 թթ.՝ գահակալության սկիզբը՝ նախորդ արտաշեսյան դրամաշրջանառության շարունակությամբ,

մ.թ.ա. 88-81թթ.՝ նվաճումների ժամանակաշրջան՝ ռազմական նպատակներով կատարված դրամաթողարկմամբ՝ Պոնտական դրամական հայեցակարգի ազդեցությամբ,

մ.թ.ա. 80-69 թթ.՝ հարաբերական խաղաղության շրջան՝ Մելիկյան «դրամական հայեցակարգի» ազդեցությամբ,

մ.թ.ա. 69-55 թթ.՝ գահակալման ավարտը՝ հռոմեական գերիշխանության ներքո:

Հարկ է նշել, որ Տիգրան II-ն աչքի է ընկնում նաև երեք հաջորդական տոմարների կիրառմամբ՝ երեք կոնկրետ համատեքստերում, որոնցից ոչ մեկը նրա գահակալական տոմարը չէ: Մի կողմից՝ Պոնտական «դրամական հայեցակարգի» ազդեցությամբ Տիգրանյանների տոմարով թվագրված դրամների խումբն է՝ նրա գահակալության առաջին մասում:

Մյուս կողմից, Դամասկոսի դրամներն են՝ ըստ տեղական սովորության Մելիկյան տոմարով թվագրված: Վերջապես, նրա գահակալության վերջին շրջանի դրամները, որոնք թողարկվել են հռոմեական տիրապետության ներքո և թվագրված են Հայաստանի Պոմպեյան տոմարով:

Թագավորության չորս միատարր բլոկների բաժանումը հնարավորություն է տալիս նաև վերլուծությունն ավարտին հասցնել նոր առանցքով, որը վերաբերում է խույրերին: Տիգրան II-ն առավել հայտնի է իր թագի բնորոշ տեսակով՝ աստղ՝ երկու արծիվներով: Այս թագը, որն ամենահայտնին է, միակը չէ, որ կրել է այս տիրակալը, ոչ էլ տոհմական Արտաշեսյան թագ է: Տիգրան II-ի առաջին դրամների վրա խույրը զարդարված է միայն մեծ աստղով, ինչպես նրա նախորդներինը: «Կայսերական» փուլի դրամների վրա խույրը զարդարված է երկու արծիվներով շրջապատված աստղով: Երրորդ և վերջին փուլը Պոմպեյան վերակազմավորումից հետո (մ.թ.ա. 66 - 55 թթ.) թողարկված դրամներն են, որոնց վրա խույրը զարդարված է աստղով, երբեմն նույնիսկ պոչավոր կամ եղջրավոր աստղով:

Roy Arakelian
PhD

royarakelian@hotmail.com

ÉTUDE SUR LA CHRONOLOGIE DES EMISSIONS
MONETAIRES DE TIGRANE II

Mots-clés: Tigranes, ΔΗΜΟ, dynastie des Artaxiades, communauté civique, ère Tigranide, ère Séleucide, ère Pompéienne

Une des caractéristiques du grand souverain artaxiade est d’avoir un monnayage qui semble manquer de cohérence. Dans la présente étude, une nouvelle périodisation du monnayage de Tigrane II est envisagée avec une nouvelle esquisse d’une vision globale de ces émissions.

La classification proposée est fonction d’une nouvelle hypothèse qui jusqu’à maintenant avait été négligé. Il s’agit de l’instauration d’une communauté civique à Artaxata après la défaite face à Pompée en 66 av. J.-C. reflétée sur les monnaies par l’inscription “ΔΗΜΟ”.

Sur la base de cette analyse il est possible d'effectuer un classement homogène, en quatre périodes clairement distinctes, du monnayage de Tigrane II. Nous avons tenté de montrer que chaque période avait une doctrine monétaire propre et identifiée. Nous pourrions ainsi résumer notre division du règne en ces quatre blocs chronologiques :

95-89 av. J.-C.: le début du règne avec continuation de l'usage monétaire artaxiade antérieur;

88-81 av. J.-C.: la période des conquêtes avec les frappes à but militaire avec une influence de la "doctrine monétaire" pontique;

80-69 av. J.-C.: la période d'une paix relative avec l'influence de la "doctrine monétaire" séleucide;

69-55 av. J.-C.: la fin du règne avec une prédominance romaine.

Il est également à noter que Tigrane II se distingue également avec l'utilisation de trois ères successives, dans trois contextes particuliers, dont aucune ne constitue son ère régnale. D'une part, le bloc des monnaies datées selon l'ère *tigranide*, dans la première partie de son règne, influencée par la "doctrine monétaire pontique". D'autre part, les monnaies de Damas datées, selon l'usage locale, de l'ère séleucide. Enfin, les monnaies de la dernière période de son règne, sous domination romaine, datées selon l'ère pompéienne d'Arménie.

La division du règne en quatre blocs homogènes permet également de compléter analyse par un nouvel axe, celui des tiaras. Tigrane II est surtout connu pour un type de tiare caractéristique avec une étoile encadrée de deux aigles. Cette tiare, qui est la plus médiatisée, n'est ni la seule portée par ce souverain, ni la tiare dynastique des artaxiades. Les premières monnaies de Tigrane II, sont ornées par une grosse étoile, et rien d'autre, comme ses prédécesseurs. Viennent ensuite les monnaies de la phase "impériale" durant lesquelles sa tiare comporte l'étoile encadrée par les deux aigles et qui réunit la part la plus importante de son corpus monétaire. La troisième et dernière phase correspond à la période postérieure à la réorganisation pompéienne (66-55 av. J.-C.) avec une série de monnaies où la tiare est ornée d'une étoile, voire d'une étoile filante ou d'une corne.