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SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES  
MA IN BLACK SEA CULTURAL STUDIES

## **ANCIENT ART IN THE BLACK SEA**

### **ART USED FOR POLITICAL PROPAGANDA:**

#### **THE CASE OF MITHRIDATES**



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## Prologue

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The life and the expansionist policy of the last Pontic king, Mithridates VI Eupator Dionysos, is the subject of scientific works already from the 15<sup>th</sup> century. A critical estimation of scholarly writings reveals plainly not only the qualitative but also the quantitative differences in the acceptance of the Pontic king, even though the available textual sources remained immutable<sup>1</sup>. However, despite the fact that the ancient written reports on Mithridates VI are not few but, unfortunately, only indirect, no biography of him has been survived from antiquity<sup>2</sup>.

This paper combines the ancient history of the Pontic kingdom of Mithridates VI and his predecessors with archaeological data in an attempt, firstly, to shed new light on the reign of Mithridates VI in the Black Sea region and in surrounding areas and, secondly, to understand the political and the social structure of the region during the late Hellenist period. In order to achieve these purposes, the paper is presented in two separate but kindred parts. The first chapter, with more introductory form, has been divided into two main sections. In the first, the origin of the Pontic family during the Hellenistic period is examined, while the life and the expansionist policy of Mithridates VI are investigated to a shallow depth in the second section.

The focus on affairs within the borders of the kingdom in the first chapter is expanded beyond the borders of the realm in chapter two, in order to understand the propagandistic role of the Mithridates VI policy. Here, the royal coins of the Pontic king are discussed (section one) as a medium, through which Mithridates VI communicated his power across the Hellenistic world. In addition, the Mithridatic VI portraits and statues (section two) and the monument on Delos (section three) are also discussed in this chapter, since both of them indicate a widespread impact of the Mithridates VI.

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<sup>1</sup> Summerer 2009, 28, notes that many scholars, especially in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, judge Mithridates VI as a cruel oriental ruler, despite the fact that from the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century scholars react against this negative tendency, transforming his image from that of notable enemy of the Romans and Western civilization to liberator of Hellenism.

<sup>2</sup> What survives of Mithridates VI story was written from the standpoint of imperial Rome, after his death in 63 B.C. S. Mayor 2010, 6.

All the types of art have been helpful to comprehend the extent of Mithridatic rule and to reconstruct an economic and socio-political picture of the central Black Sea region under Mithridates VI. However, the most problematic part of this paper was the section of the images of Mithridates VI -portraits and statues-, since a sculptural image of him with an inscription has yet to be discovered. Only the continuation of a properly planned archaeological and historical research can provide new material, which will make it possible to expand our picture of the history of Pontic kingdom under Mithridates VI Eupator and the role of the art for his political propaganda.

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### **A brief history of the Hellenistic kingdom of Pontus**

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In order to approximate and to understand not only the historical frame in which Mithridates VI operated but also to investigate safely the aspects of his character, his relations with Pontic people and the reason for his ambitions, it is necessary and almost obligatory a brief reference to the history of the kingdom of Pontus as a geographical and political unity<sup>3</sup>.

The kingdom of Pontus, on the southern part of the Black Sea region, was divided into two distinctive areas. The coastal region, bordering the Black Sea, was separated from the mountainous interior area by the Pontic Alps, which runs roughly east-west, parallel and almost close to the coast. However, the division between the shore zone and hinterland also reflected a sharp cultural division, as the region and generally speaking the Asia Minor had always been a crossroads for many civilizations since the antiquity. In the seashore the Greek presence was predominated over all others population units, while, in contrast, the interior was occupied by the Anatolians -Cappadocians and Paphlagonians-.

According to this way, it is clearly understood the policy of Mithridates VI, which had been used in his effort to appeal to the two, above mentioned, different groups of people with whom he dealt<sup>4</sup>. To present a Greek face to the Greek world, claiming that he was descended on his mother's side from Alexander the Great and Seleucus I, and an Anatolian one to the native world, referring connection on his father's side with Cyrus and Darius, was one of the ingenious policies, which have been adopted by the last king of Pontus. It is characteristic that the gods favored by the Pontic king often were syncretistic with Greek, Anatolian and Persian elements, which could be perceived in a different way by the great variety of the ethnic group, who lived in the area<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> Erciyas 2006, 9.

<sup>4</sup> Erciyas 2006, 10.

<sup>5</sup> McGing 1986, 11.

Meanwhile, in the question in which of these people did Mithridates VI actually belong, the answer claims a brief investigation of the origins and development of the Mithridates' dynasty. During the 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C. the region of Pontus was part of the Persian satrapy of Cappadocia under the authority of Mithridates of Cius, who have been followed by his son Ariobarzanes II (363-337 B.C.)<sup>6</sup>, who revolted against Artaxerxes II<sup>7</sup>. However, Ariobarzanes II was betrayed by his son Mithridates II of Cius (337-302 B.C.), who continued to control the region even after the Alexander's conquests, but being vassal to Antigonos I Monophthalmus. Mithridates II, because he was suspected of siding with Cassander, was killed by Antigonos I<sup>8</sup>, while the worry of the later began to grow of Mithridates son, also called Mithridates, known as Mithridates I Ctistes (302-266 B.C.), planning to kill him<sup>9</sup>.

However, after the warning of Antigonos son, Demetrius I Poliorcetes, with whom Mithridates had formed a close friendship<sup>10</sup>, the later managed to get away to the east. He succeeded to rule the Pontic kingdom until 266 B.C., expanding the royal authority between the northern Cappadocia and the eastern Paphlagonia, proclaiming himself the founder of the kingdom<sup>11</sup>. After the short term period of conquestness of his successor, Ariobarzanes (266-250 B.C.), his son, Mithridates II, became king (250-220 B.C.). He adopted a policy in allying himself with the Seleucids by marrying Laodice, the daughter of Antiochus II Theos, the sister of King Seleucus II Callinicus<sup>12</sup>, while in meantime, Mithridates gave his daughter to Antiochus Hierax<sup>13</sup>. All of these meant that Mithridates' Pontic kingdom was able to appeal to the Hellenistic world as a strong and powerful kingdom<sup>14</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> Diodorus Siculus, *Library of History*, XVI.90.2.

<sup>7</sup> The hypothesis that the small city of Cius on the southern shores of Propontis, as mentioned by Diodorus Siculus, could have been served as the base for the entire building of the Pontic kingdom remains an unsolved issue. The facts that Cius was not only far away from the perspective of developments but also gave only 1000 drachms as tribute to the Athenian Alliance limit rather weak the important and fundamental role of the city. S. Bosworth – Wheatley 1998, 156.

<sup>8</sup> Diodorus Siculus, *Library of History*, XX.111.4.

<sup>9</sup> McGing 1986, 15.

<sup>10</sup> Plutarch, *Life of Demetrius*, IV.

<sup>11</sup> Polybius, *The Histories*, V.43.2, refers that Mithridates I came from the seven families of the Persian dynasty and that the land, which ruled, was a gift from the king Darius I. He was the first to issue royal coins, that copied Alexander's staters, using Hellenic images on his coinage. S. Erciyas 2006, 13-14.

<sup>12</sup> However, during the War of Brothers, between Seleucus II and his brother Antiochus Hierax, Mithridates II defeated Seleucus.

<sup>13</sup> Polybius, *The Histories*, V.74.5, VIII.19.7, VIII.20.11.

<sup>14</sup> Erciyas 2006, 14.

The following period, after the death of Mithridates II, when his son Mithridates III ruled (220-189/8 B.C.), is a silent period in the history of the Pontic kingdom. It is reasonable to suggest that not only the Pontic king felt more confident with his control over his territory but also that the Seleucid Empire no longer constituted a threat to his reign<sup>15</sup>. Nevertheless, Pharnaces I, who ruled between 189-160 B.C., adopted the most extensive policy against the Greek coastal cities in the south Black Sea coastline, as well as friendly relations and contacts with many cities on the northern Black Sea region. His policy laid to the foundation of a system of a consolidated Black Sea into a financial and by extension a political frame. After the common war with Prusias I of Bithynia against Eumenes II of Pergamum, a confrontation, which lasted from 188 B.C. until 183 B.C., the kingdom of Pontus extended from Amastris to Cerasus<sup>16</sup>.

Pharnaces successor, Mithridates IV Philopator Philadelphus (160-150 B.C.), adopted a more peaceful approach, inaugurating a pro-Roman policy by sending a body of troops in order to aid the Roman ally Attalus II of Pergamum against the forces of Prusias II of Bithynia in 155 B.C.<sup>17</sup>. His nephew, Mithridates V Euergetes (150-120 B.C.), carried on the friendly relationship with the Rome, receiving the land of Phrygia as a gift from her<sup>18</sup>, while he invaded Cappadocia and married his daughter Laodice to the king of Cappadokia, Ariathes VI. During his reign and applying philhellenic tendencies, Sinope, the capital of the Pontic kingdom, was home to a Hellenic court<sup>19</sup>.

After his death and because both of his sons, Mithridates VI and Mithridates Chrestus, were underage, Euergetes' wife, Laodice, took over the kingdom, who favored with obvious way her younger son. Surviving from a suspicious riding accident and spending seven years in the interior of the Pontic region<sup>20</sup>, Mithridates VI assumed control of his kingdom by 116/15 B.C., when he returned in Sinope, overthrowing his own mother and killing his brother<sup>21</sup>. Shortly after he had become

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<sup>15</sup> McGing 1986, 23.

<sup>16</sup> Polybius, *The Histories*, XXV.2.

<sup>17</sup> Erciyas 2006, 16.

<sup>18</sup> Strabo, *Geography*, XIV.1.38.

<sup>19</sup> McGing 1986, 39.

<sup>20</sup> Justin, *Epitome*, XXXVII.2, referred that the guardians of the boy made him ride dangerous horses and throw javelins in order to kill him, but when he survived they tried to poison him.

<sup>21</sup> Appian, *Mithridatic Wars*, XII.16.112.



king, he managed to add the Bosporan kingdom to his realm<sup>22</sup>, while he possessed the complete coastline from the east of Trapezus up to Colchis, when Antipater gave him Armenia<sup>23</sup>. In this way, Mithridates VI not only controlled almost the coastal area of the Black Sea basin, but he was the first to utilize the philhellenism as a form of propaganda, taking advantage of the dissatisfaction of the Greek population, that lived under the Roman beam. Mithridates VI, claiming descend from both Alexander the Great and the Persian King Darius, presented himself as well as a philhellenic king and conscionable successor of the Persian Empire, a propagandistic ruse in order to earn added luster and nobility<sup>24</sup>.

However, despite the multitude of his abilities, Mithridates VI was repeatedly defeated by the Roman forces during the three Mithridatic Wars, when, in the end, his son, Pharnaces II, and his army turned against him. In 63 B.C. he committed suicide, while his son sent his body to the Rome as a proof of his goodwill. In 49 B.C., during the civil war between Pompey and Caesar, Pharnaces breaking the peace treaty conquered Colchis and part of Armenia. Even though he was defeated by the Roman army, he did not stop to organize plans for a generalized revolt of the whole Hellenistic world against the Rome, until he was speedily defeated by Ceasar at the battle of Zela. After his failure, Pharnaces fled to the Bosporan kingdom, where he tried to congregate a small army made up of Scythians and Sarmatians, before he was killed in a battle. His son Darius, after the death of his father, emerged as a king of the Pontus kingdom, under the dictates of Marcus Antonius.

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### **The life and the expansionist policy of Mithridates VI**

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#### **➤ Black Sea and Asia Minor**

Mithridates VI during the first twenty five years of his reign succeeded to transform the small and weak kingdom of Pontus to a large and autonomous power,

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<sup>22</sup> Strabo, *Geography*, VII.4.4.

<sup>23</sup> Strabo, *Geography*, XII.3.1, 3.28.

<sup>24</sup> McGing 2009, 205.

controlling the majority of the northern and central Anatolia, as well as the northern and the northwestern land of the Black Sea basin<sup>25</sup>. Only Bithynia and Thrace in the south west and the mountainous north-eastern shore were outside his sovereignty. As a personal result, it was expected to collide with the Roman interests in the territory and the war between these two powers was unavoidable<sup>26</sup>.

However, the subjection of Paphlagonia in 108/107 B.C. by Mithridates VI in cooperation with the king of Bithynia Nicomedes III Euergetes, was the catalytic fact that activated the attention and involvement of the Roman Senate<sup>27</sup>. Meanwhile, Mithridates VI in 101 B.C. intervened in Cappadocia, as he had a personal concern for that kingdom, since his sister Laodice had been married the king Ariathes VI<sup>28</sup>. After the death of the later, Nicomedes III of Bithynia, breaking the rules of cooperation with Mithridates VI, invaded Cappadocia. Mithridates VI immediately responded to that attack by sending his army, expelling Nicomedes and giving, at the beginning, the Cappadocian throne to his nephew, Ariarathes VII, and finally to one of his sons, Ariarathes IX, with Gordius as regent<sup>29</sup>. This arrangement lasted only for five years, since the Roman Senate was forced to intervene after a Cappadocian revolt on 97 B.C., placing Ariobarzanes I Philoromaeus on its throne<sup>30</sup>.

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<sup>25</sup> The Greek colonists from the first moment that settled in the north Black Sea region, were always under a strong pressure from the Scythians. In order to kick against the Scythian compulsion, they created a military and religious league, which was headed at the beginning by the dynasty of Archaenactids (480 B.C.) and later by the dynasty of Spartocids, who reigned until the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C. (S. Maslennikov 2001, 249. Saprykin 2006, 275). In that period (115/14 B.C.), Mithridates VI intervened in a dispute between the Bosporan kingdom and the Scythians, dispatching a troop under the operation of Diophantus and defeating completely the Scythians. From now on, in the fortified settlement Kuru Bas, east of Theodosia, a Mithridatic garrison was established in order to inspect the route from Theodosia to the interior of the Crimean Peninsula. (S. Højte 2009, 102-103. Gavrilov 2009, 335-336). In this way, the whole northern Pontic region was turned into a province of Pontus, the center of which was located in Panticapaeum. (S. Molev 2009, 326).

<sup>26</sup> Majbom-Madsen 2009, 193.

<sup>27</sup> After the death of Attalus of Pergamum in 133 B.C., the kingdom of Pergamum and the kingdom of Cilicia became Roman provinces, while in the east was the independent kingdom of Cappadocia, between Cilicia and Pontus, to the west of Pontus was Paphlagonia and at the north-western corner of the Asia Minor was the kingdom of Bithynia and in the middle of all these territories were the Celts of Galatia. Any attempt by Mithridates VI to expand his authority into these areas would certainly engender the fury and counteraction of the Romans.

<sup>28</sup> Justin, *Epitome*, XXXVIII.1.1, referred that Ariarathes VI was killed by Gordius, a representative of the Cappadocian aristocratic elite, in 116 B.C.

<sup>29</sup> However, Ariarathes VII did not remain on the throne for a long time, since Mithridates VI turned against him, because the first did not allowed Gordius, Mithridates VI representative, to participate in the rule of Cappadocia.

<sup>30</sup> Nicomedes III in his try to deal with Romans sent an embassy to Rome, while, in the meantime, made an unsuccessful attempt to install Ariarathes VIII as king of Cappadocia. Mithridates VI prosecuted Ariarathes VIII away from the kingdom, while he sent his own envoy to Rome. The Senate responded by ordering both parties to evacuate Cappadocia and Paphlagonia, areas which earned their freedom and autonomy. S. Justin, *Epitome*, XXXVIII.2.8, 5.9. Strabo, *Geography*, XII.2.11.

For almost the first twenty five years of his domination, Mithridates VI followed a prophylactic policy in the management of the issues with the Rome, the strongest military power in the region, while he avoided intelligently the armed conflicts of long range<sup>31</sup>. However, the weakness of Bithynia after the death of Nicomedes III in 94 B.C.<sup>32</sup>, the alliance with the king of Armenia Tigranes I<sup>33</sup> along with the explosion of the Social War in Rome affected the expansionist tendencies of Mithridates VI, leading up to the First Mithridatic War<sup>34</sup>.

## ➤ Wars with the Rome

By encouraging Nicomedes IV of Bithynia to attack Pontus in 89 B.C. and by occupying the main roads into Pontus, the Roman commission declared war on the Pontic Kingdom, while Mithridates VI invaded Bithynia. His generals Neoptolemus and Archelaus overwhelmed Nicomedes and defeated Aquillius, destroying a big part of the Roman armies<sup>35</sup>. By the end of 88 B.C. Mithridates VI had under his control the biggest part of Asia and Greece, a situation which changed dramatically few years later, after the destruction of the Pontic troop at Chaeronea<sup>36</sup> and at Orchomenus in

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<sup>31</sup> Majbom-Madsen 2009, 195.

<sup>32</sup> Mithridates VI sent Socrates Crestus to take over Bithynia, expelling Nicomedes IV, and removed Ariobarzanes from the Cappadocian throne, replacing him with his son Ariarathes IX. S. Justin, *Epitome*, XXXVIII.3.4. McGing 1986, 79. Appian, *Mithridatic Wars*, XII.2.10, refers that the facts in Bithynia and Cappadocia occurred almost simultaneously.

<sup>33</sup> In 96/95 B.C. Tigranes I came to power and united Armenia, while he married the Mithridates VI daughter Cleopatra, allying himself with the Pontus king, who persuaded the Armenian king to occupy Cappadocia. S. McGing 1986, 78. The use of Socrates Chrestus and Tigranes I reflects the willing of Mithridates VI, who did not want to challenge Rome too openly, by placing the obvious responsibility on the others. S. Majbom-Madsen 2009, 196.

<sup>34</sup> The expansionist attempts of Mithridates VI until the outbreak of the First Mithridatic War should be explained as an action arising from the general ideology of the Hellenistic kings, in their try to enlarge their domains. His imperial policy was organized in order to avoid a final encounter with Rome, despite the fact that he had come very close to the limits of what was possible to happen without an armed conflict. In fact, he wished for a fight, but a war on his terms, in which Rome should be seen to appear as the invader and Pontus as the aggrieved party. S. McGing 2009, 209-210. Olbrycht 2009, 176.

<sup>35</sup> In the middle of 88 B.C., Mithridates VI ordered the cities of Asia to execute all the Roman citizens of the area. Appian, *Mithridatic Wars*, XXII.23-24, described the atrocities that the Romans suffered from the citizens of Asia, while the estimated number of people who died in ancient written sources varied between 80.000-150.000. S. McGing 1986, 113. The genocide of Mithridates VI reflects his ambition to win over lands in Anatolia regardless of the consequences. S. Hoyo – Antela-Bernadez – Arrayas-Morales – Busquets-Artigas 2011, 291.

<sup>36</sup> Appian, *Mithridatic Wars*, XII.29.

Boeotia<sup>37</sup>, which ended the Pontic invasion of mainland Greece. Despite the initial refusal of the terms of the treaty by Mithridates VI, the defeat of his squadron in the battle of Fimbria, led him, finally, to agree with the terms that had been offered, ending the unsuccessful war against Rome in 85 B.C.<sup>38</sup>.

The defeat of the Pontic kingdom during the First Mithridatic War had encouraged revolts in the Cimmerian Bosphorus and in Colchis. The preparation for a major military expedition in these areas alarmed Murena, the Roman governor of Asia, who launched a series of raids into Mithridatic VI territory without the authority from Rome. Mithridates VI tried to stop the fighting by diplomacy, sending envoys to Roman Senate, who responded by sending Calpurnius to order Murena to end the war, who, however, did not pay attention on them. Finally, Mithridates VI achieved a victory against the Roman troops around 81 B.C., gaining an extensive strip in Cappadocia<sup>39</sup>.

The third Mithridatic War begun in the summer of 73 B.C. with a Pontic attack of Bithynia, which, after the death of Nicomedes IV, had become a Roman province. In this way, the Roman forces had been brought closer to the Pontic interior, controlling the vital straits between Europe and Asia. In contrast to these events, Mithridates VI gained an alliance with the rebel Roman governor of Spain, Sertorius, who provided the Pontic king with a number of Roman officers in order to help him to reform his army. Mithridates VI first victories very soon turned into a disaster, constraining him to ask for assistance from his son Machares, the king of Bosphorus, and from Tigranes, the king of Armenia, without, however, any results. After unremitting efforts to find allies, Mithridates VI established a base in the Bosporan kingdom. However, the Bosporans, who were dissatisfied with Mithridates VI, proclaimed Mithridates' son Pharnaces II king, an event which marked the end of Mithridates VI reign in 63 B.C.<sup>40</sup>.

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<sup>37</sup> Appian, *Mithridatic Wars*, XII.49.

<sup>38</sup> McGing 1986, 130.

<sup>39</sup> Erciyas 2006, 26.

<sup>40</sup> There are many issues concerning the way of the end of Mithridates VI life. S. Erciyas 2006, 26-28.

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### Coins as a key role in transmitting Mithridatic VI ideology

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Of their early existence, Pontic coins were one of the main tools, with which the kings “played” their political propagandistic game<sup>41</sup>. The first interest of these Pontic coins resides in the royal portrait. The Pontic kings, in general, were proud of their Iranian-Persian descent and even if they soon married into the Seleucid dynasty their attachment to their oriental roots remained strong, something that gave the opportunity for a gallery of semi-barbarian royal portraits to be created, a fact that has no real parallel in Hellenistic portraiture<sup>42</sup>. However, the predecessors’ of Mithridates VI never struck vast amounts of coins. The coinages, they issued, were intended for specific and limited purposes, such as military ones and neither for wide trade activity nor to facilitate the small transactions of their citizens<sup>43</sup> (Fig. 1). The second, main point of interest of the Pontic coins is the iconography of symbols. The majority of them represent the eight-rayed star and the crescent, symbols that generally belong to the Pontic house, imitating in a way the most common types of the Hellenistic royal rulers<sup>44</sup> (Fig. 2).

When Mithridates VI came to power the number of the cities minting coins increased. The Pontic cities were allowed to mint coins, but they were under some sort of official control, since they had exactly the same types. A central authority with an organized political program intended to unify the region. The standardization of mythological themes on the coins emphasized the origins of the Pontic royal house, which went back not only to the powerful Persians but also to the Greeks. In this way, Mithridates VI tried to emphasize his familiarity with the Greeks by having his city mints

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<sup>41</sup> On the southern coast of the Black Sea region there has been limited archaeological exploration, that could help to understand the historical development of the cities, so coins are especially important. S. Erciyas 2006, 38.

<sup>42</sup> Callataÿ 2009, 64.

<sup>43</sup> Callataÿ 2009, 87.

<sup>44</sup> Callataÿ 2009, 64.

use gods and goddesses, who appear to be a combination of Greek and native, and by portraying himself on coins in a style well known to the Hellenistic world<sup>45</sup>.

However, many discussions have been occurred about the portraits of Mithridates VI on the coins. Hellenistic kings employed particular features (such as hair and the shape of the head) in hopes of emphasizing their relation to their great predecessors<sup>46</sup>. Comparative studies on the coin portraits of Mithridates VI show a certain resemblance especially with Alexander the Great, particularly in the lower part of the face (Fig. 3-4). But even in his use of Alexander's imagery on coinage, he also ensured that his portraits would not constitute a carbon copy of the Macedonian king<sup>47</sup>.

These coins of Mithridates VI, that the head of him is depicted on them, are basically be distinguished in two different portrait types called 'realistic' and 'idealised'. These two types supersede each other in the Pontic mint in 87 B.C., after the defeat of Mithridates VI in the First Mithridatic War<sup>48</sup>.

In his early portrait in coins (106 B.C. until 87 B.C.), Mithridates VI is depicted in the age of thirties in a significant change of the portraits in coins of his predecessors (Fig. 5). Without showing any of the peculiarities of the previous coin portraits, such as an enlargement of the eyes or a fluffiness of the face, Mithridates VI is more in accordance with royal Greek iconography of the period and not with the distinctly Iranian-Persian looking predecessors. Moreover, the figure has heavy sideburns, the nose is fairly short, while he has a large upper lip and his hair is a bit longer than usual, which projects in star like strands from a part at the back of his head and falls loosely to the back under the diadem<sup>49</sup>.

While the front of the coins with the portraits cannot be said to carry any other specific ideological references except from its Greekness, the depiction of Pegasus in the reverse, which is the most common depicted image in this period, clearly refers to the dual heritage of Mithridates VI (that from Darius and that from Alexander the

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<sup>45</sup> Despite the fact that Mithridates VI used Sinope as capital of his kingdom, during his reign Amisos gained a prominent position on the southern Black Sea coast, since this city produced the largest variety of coins. S. Erciyas 2006, 121-134.

<sup>46</sup> Højte 2009, 145.

<sup>47</sup> He tried to be differentiated from Alexander the Great by his long sideboards, his nose and eyes. S. Erciyas 2006, 147.

<sup>48</sup> Højte 2009, 148.

<sup>49</sup> Højte 2009, 148-149.

Great)<sup>50</sup>, and in this way appealing to a large group of people living and fighting for him in Pontus<sup>51</sup> (Fig. 6). Specifically, Pegasus originated from the slain neck of Medusa and was therefore linked to Perseus, that was the mythical ancestor of the Persians<sup>52</sup> and who sometimes considered to be an indirect ancestor of the Pontic family as well<sup>53</sup>. Above the head of Pegasus is depicted the eight-pointed star and the moon sickle, something that helps the researchers to understand that these motifs represent the Pontic royal house and they appear on all the silver and gold coins<sup>54</sup>.

In the second type of the coins Mithridates VI is depicted in a younger age than the previous years' coins, while the features are softer and more idealised (Fig. 7). The biggest emphasis is given in the hair, which flows to the back in thin flame-like threads, as if Mithridates VI was moving at great speed, and is bounded by a diadem. Once again there are a lot of and more evident similarities with the portraits of Alexander. The most significant is that over the forehead the hair rises in clear imitation of the famous *anastole* (tilting the head to the left) of Alexander, while the portrait also has long sideboards, a prominent nose and a narrow forehead<sup>55</sup>. This idealised portrait style conforms closely to the most common royal types in use during the Hellenistic period, an element that helps to understand that the new coins may have been meant to place the Pontic king on the level of other Hellenistic kings<sup>56</sup>.

This image of Mithridates VI as Alexander the Great indicates his beliefs that he was the new Alexander, who had liberated or would liberate the Greeks from their oppressors, this time not from the Persians but from the Romans. The audience for this propaganda was mostly mercenaries fighting in his army and his allies among the Greek cities. This kind of portrait coins that devised during his campaign in western Asia Minor and in Greece and the new reverse motif with a grazing hind became the

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<sup>50</sup> Højte 2009, 149.

<sup>51</sup> McGing 1986, 94, refers the wide variety of people, who lived in the area, and the necessity to appeal to all for some kind of unity.

<sup>52</sup> Arrian, *Anabasis*, III.3.2, wrote that Perseus was the ancestor of Alexander the Great, while Herodotus, *Histories*, VII.150, mentioned that Perseus was the ancestor of the Persians.

<sup>53</sup> Erciyas 2006, 121-134.

<sup>54</sup> Højte 2009, 149.

<sup>55</sup> Højte 2009, 149, suggests that such clear imitations of Alexander are not common among Hellenistic royal portraits, but a similar attempt by the Seleukid king Diodotos, half a century earlier, had practically the same outcome.

<sup>56</sup> Erciyas 2006, 129.

standard type in the Pontic mint upon his return and for the rest of his reign and shows that he pursued this line in his foreign policy till the very end<sup>57</sup>.

From now on, the most frequent image on the reverse of his minted coins of the idealised style was an animal grazing accompanied by a star and a crescent (Fig. 8), a composition which was always encircled by a wreath of ivy leaves and bunches of grapes<sup>58</sup>. It is believed that Mithridates VI used the stag that grazed instead of Pegasus (that used extensively in the first “realistic” style) after 89/8 B.C. (when Mithridates VI conquered Asia), because the image of Pegasus reflects much more the Persian background<sup>59</sup>.

On the other hand, the grazing stag would have been appealed to the newly conquered people of Mithridates VI, since it was closely associated with the Ephesian Artemis, reflecting the Mithridates VI conquer of Asia Minor<sup>60</sup>. However, except from Mithridates VI, a lot of kings used a doe on the reverse of their coins before him, such as Pharnaces, and Pontic cities minted coins with Artemis on the obverse and a stag on the reverse<sup>61</sup>.

Another propagandistic technic that Mithridates VI used during his reign apart from the imitation of Alexander was the deity of Dionysus<sup>62</sup>. The king may have adopted Dionysus’ name as a tribute to his maternal ancestor Antiochus VI Dionysus of Syria and may have chosen to associate himself with Dionysus because the God’s eastern origin recalled his own background, while on several inscriptions his name appeared as Mithridates Eupator Dionysus<sup>63</sup>. From then on a significant number of

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<sup>57</sup> Højte 2009, 149.

<sup>58</sup> Erciyas 2006, 121-134. The majority of the archaeologists claim that the reverses of the two types were politically motivated. S. Price 1968, 4.

<sup>59</sup> Price 1968, 3.

<sup>60</sup> Price 1968, 3.

<sup>61</sup> McGing 1986, 101. Furthermore, the significance of the star and crescent on the royal coins has also been frequently debated (Fig. 9). There are many different opinions about what might they were represented. Their appearance on every royal issue suggests that they were indeed important symbols and they were connected to the royal Pontic family. Among the most predominant are the opinions that believed they were symbols of an indigenous god named Men and had their origins in Persia, which derived from Perseus, just as the star symbol of the Macedonians. Others believe that they were Ma and Mithras, with whom the star and crescent symbols are associated. S. Erciyas 2006, 131.

<sup>62</sup> Many royal coins of Mithridates VI were decorated with an ivy wreath, which testifies to the existence of a royal cult of Dionysus in the Pontic kingdom and the identification of the king with this god. S Saprykin 2009, 250.

<sup>63</sup> In this way the royal propaganda machine had to portray Mithridates VI as protector and even as liberator of the Greeks and to identify him with the god, who was widely worshipped as Savior (Soter). S Saprykin 2009, 251.



Dionysiac themes are carried on the Pontic bronze coins, something that it is not depicted in the silver ones<sup>64</sup> (Fig. 10).

➤ Coins of the Bosporan kingdom during the era of Mithridates VI

It is believed that the striking of the coins was linked to political events in the kingdom of Mithridates VI<sup>65</sup>. Before his first two wars, there is a heavy minting of coins, something that led someone to understand that this practice indicated preparations for battle. The minting activity before and during the wars proves that Mithridates VI was preparing to pay a large army drawn from areas in and around his kingdom<sup>66</sup>.

Only in his era there were the so-called ‘municipal’ bronze coins that minted in the name of different localities and could suggest that some cities possessed a degree of autonomy<sup>67</sup>. The idea of political unity under the rule of Mithridates VI was partially carried to Bosporan Kingdom as well. It is believed that the interference of Mithridates VI in the politics of the whole northern Black Sea region was not purely philanthropic. The unification of parts of the northern Black Sea coast with the whole southern coast meant that the economies of the two regions could become interlinked. That also meant that there was a standardization in coinage, since the Bosporan cities were inspired by the southern Pontic coins and created standard types both<sup>68</sup>.

The minting of new Pontic type coins in the northern shores began afterwards mainly in Panticapaeum and Phanagoria. In these cities, in the early stages of the Pontic king’s involvement, large obols were minted. These obols featured the head of Poseidon/trident and small coins with Athena/prow, that resembled the Pontic type of Zeus/eagle on thunderbolt (Fig. 11-12). There were also coins with Artemis/a standing stag (Fig. 13), depictions that reminded the significance of Perseus, Pegasus

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<sup>64</sup> Højte 2009, 145-162.

<sup>65</sup> Price 1968, 4-5.

<sup>66</sup> Erciyas 2006, 128, suggests that the heaviest minting of coins was in the years 93/2, 92/1, B.C. and 90/89 B.C. as well as 76/5 and 75/4 B.C. During the first war, minting continued at the same rate at three different mints. Following the end of the second war, in which Mithridates VI was defeated, all minting ceased.

<sup>67</sup> Højte 2009, 98.

<sup>68</sup> Erciyas 2006, 163.

and the stag for the Pontic kingdom. However, the presence of Artemis and stag on coins from Chersonesus indicates that these motifs were not new, but during the reign of Mithridates VI had gained a new significance in Bosphorus<sup>69</sup> (Fig. 14).

Furthermore, close to Theodosia, in the Kuru Bas fortified settlement, coin finds of tetrachalks of the Dionysos/a tripod with thyrsus and obol of Men/standing Dionysos from Panticapaeum, tetrachalks with Dionysos/tripod with thyrsus of Gorgippia, obols of Amisos with Perseus/Pegasos, as well as tetrachalks of Amisos, Sinope, Amastris and Pharnakeia of the Zeus/eagle type, suggest that there were a lot of similarities with the coins of Pontus<sup>70</sup>.

From the very beginning of the 1<sup>st</sup> century B.C. the variety of coins increased. Panticapaeum, Phanagoria and Gorgippia minted silver coins with Dionysus, Artemis and Apollo. Dionysus in particular assumed a prominent place on coins, something that happened also in the southern coast. These silver coins might depict the king Mithridates VI in the guise of Dionysus<sup>71</sup>.

Without doubt, most of the new types of civic coins that minted in the era of Mithridates IV Eupator celebrated the origins of the Pontic family and became part of his political propaganda. The coins unified the region in commerce and played an important role in transmitting Mithridatic ideology not only in the kingdom of Pontus but also to a significant part of the northern shores of the Black Sea<sup>72</sup>.

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### Portraits and statues of Mithridates VI

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In the Hellenistic period, when the monarchy arose, the cities' dependence to various powers became strong. Many dedications to kings and political or military leaders appeared and the number of them continuously increased as the political situation changed by the time. A lot of portraits and statues, which depict significant personalities, such as kings, erected and played an important role in the propaganda of

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<sup>69</sup> Smekalova 2009, 243.

<sup>70</sup> Gavrilov 2009, 339.

<sup>71</sup> Erciyas 2006, 162-166.

<sup>72</sup> Erciyas 2006, 175-182.

their politics and strategies. Obviously, the construction of these statues and portraits was not a random event, but it was a very well organized procedure supervised by the committee<sup>73</sup>.

More specific, referring to Mithridates VI and despite the fact that a lot of statues were dedicated to him, the main problem, which remains unsolved until now, is that only few portraits can be recognized as truly dedications to him. It is really difficult to claim which portraits and statues reflect Mithridates VI, but depended on some other findings, which consist of real evidence of Mithridates VI appearance, and after the intersection of the elements it is verified that the portraits belong to him<sup>74</sup>. For instance, Appian refers that Mithridates VI of Pontus ‘had a large frame, as his armor, which he sent to Nemea and to Delphi’<sup>75</sup>, which is the only piece of textual testimony that helps the scholars in a large degree to identify the portraits according to the facial features. Additionally, the most reliable source for the approximation of facial features is the silver coin portraits and even these could be influenced by aspects of idealization and heroization. However, in order to identify the portraits of the king of Pontus, it is preferable to make some comparisons with the two types of coins -realistic and idealized- that Mithridates VI minted<sup>76</sup>.

➤ The problem of the identification of Mithridates VI portraits

The so called ‘Schwarzeberger Alexander’, which is now in München Glyptotek, was first published as a portrait of Alexander the Great (Fig. 15). Many arguments took place by scholars about the identification of the head, as many of them did not accept the aspect that it really depicts the Alexander. The shape of the head and the output of the hair on the sides and on the back differ from the typical portraits of Alexander, while the only element which fits to his reflection is the *anastole* of the head. On the other hand, it is surely known that Mithridates VI used very often the image of the Macedonian king in order to emphasize his relation to him

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<sup>73</sup> Erciyas 2006, 146.

<sup>74</sup> Erciyas 2006, 146.

<sup>75</sup> Appian, *The Mithridatic Wars*, XII,112.

<sup>76</sup> Højte 2009, 148, refers that these two types replaced each other in the minting of Pontus in mid 85 B.C., after Mithridates VI was defeated in the First Mithridatic War, though the new portrait type appeared at Pergamum and Athens from 85 B.C.

as his predecessor. Consequently, after making the comparison to the coin portraits of the king of Pontus (Fig. 16), there can be seen some similarities especially to the lower part of the face, which prove that Mithridates VI 'adopted' Alexander's image continuously in order to amplify his propaganda<sup>77</sup>.

Another statue that can take part in this argument and prove that the field of identifying portraits of Mithridates VI is open, is the statue of Heracles in the Vatican Museum, which holds the young Telephus (Fig. 17). There was a connection between Mithridates VI and Telephus, as it is believed that Mithridates VI lived in Pergamum in 88-85 B.C., where Telephus was the mythical king. Also, Telephus was the son of Heracles, from whom Mithridates VI traced his connection from his mother's side, like Alexander the Great, a fact which is mentioned in the literary sources and numismatic evidence. The change of the reverse of the image of the Mithridatic VI tetradrachms from Pegasus to a grazing hind can be linked with the identification with Telephus on the statue<sup>78</sup>. The hairstyle and child's profile strongly resemble of the adult Mithridates VI on his early silver portrait coins. In this way, the similarity to Mithridates VI coin portraits would have been immediately recognized by everyone, a fact that would 'legitimize' his rule<sup>79</sup>.

#### ➤ Sculpted portraits of Mithridates VI

One of the most famous portraits and securely identified portraits is the marble head with lion *exuviae*, which is now located in the Louvre in Paris and resembles the first portrait type which dates to around 96-88 B.C. (Fig. 18). It depicts Mithridates VI as a young man having heavy brows and pronounced chin, a slightly long nose, a small Adam's apple and long side burns. The lion scalp is referred to Heracles, although it is a strong element of the imitation of Alexander the Great. Another portrait of this type is the terracotta head with *lion exuviae*, which was found in Sinope, but it is not

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<sup>77</sup> Højte 2009, 146.

<sup>78</sup> This aspect is a little bit controversial as in one hand it is supported that the grazing hind appears on the reverse already in 95 B.C., seven years before Mithridates VI came to Pergamum. On the other hand the version of the myth that a hind symbolized the foster mother was not widely accepted in Pergamum S. Højte 2009, 147.

<sup>79</sup> Højte 2009, 147.

so well preserved to make certain identification. However, it is very possible that it reflects the face of Mithridates VI<sup>80</sup> (Fig. 19).

A sculptural group, which was erected at Pergamum (in the north Stoa of the sanctuary of Athena) and dated in the later part of the Hellenistic period, involved three figures -Prometheus, Heracles and the personification of Mount Caucasus- and was probably dowelled to the wall, judging by the cuttings on their bag, and belongs to the group of the possible portraits of Mithridates VI (Fig. 20). It is the only example in the Hellenistic world, in which mythology and royal iconography have been so completely blended. The statues were of Parian marble and their height is calculated approximately to 0.41- 0.73 m. One of the statues was a nude male with his arms in an upright position and his right leg pulled up and bent. The second nude male has a lion scalp on his head and a diadem through his hair and his motion shows that he is shooting an arrow and judging by his pose he would have originally had his back to the audience (Fig. 21). The third one is a reclining figure, most likely a personification. It is very possible that this group may have involved and other statues judging by the statue fragments that were discovered in the area of Stoa<sup>81</sup>. The main reason that Mithridates VI is identified with Heracles is that the profile of Heracles' head, especially the shape of the nose, the projection of the upper lip and the small chin, are similar to the second type of Mithridates VI portraits<sup>82</sup>.

Two portraits from the northern Black Sea have been also identified as Mithridates VI. They fit very well to the second portrait type and both of them remind the features of the image of Alexander the Great with the typical *anastole*. More specific, the head of Panticapaeum, which was found on the north-west slope of the Acropolis<sup>83</sup>, definitely shows a royal figure with a sharply turned head (Fig. 22). The other head portrait, which is now in the Museum of Odessa, has also the typical *anastole* of 'Alexander's type' and full cheeks. Also, it can be seen that it has a more

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<sup>80</sup> Højte 2009, 151.

<sup>81</sup> The identification with Heracles, which is indicated by the lion skin headdress, reminds the scene with the myth of Prometheus. In this tale, Heracles saved Prometheus from the rocks to which he was tied by killing the eagle that preyed on him. S. Erciyas 2006, 153. The figure of Mithridates VI as Hercules liberating the Titan had great symbolic value for Greeks, because it depicted the king as a savior-liberator. S. McGing 1986, 100. Kreuz 2009, 134.

<sup>82</sup> Many, however, arguments have taken place about the date and the significance of this group, for which many scholars have expressed their opinions over the subject. In any case, during the reign of Augustus the monument lost its original meaning and that's why the statue that represented Heracles was not recognizable to the people of Pergamum. S. Erciyas 2006, 154.

<sup>83</sup> Fulinska 2012, 72.

dynamic expression and the large, massive brows are well preserved<sup>84</sup>. In both heads it can be observed some typical characteristics of Mithridates VI, among them the tilt of the head and slightly parted lips, which are heavier than the Alexander's characteristics<sup>85</sup> (Fig. 23).

Additionally, two heads, which were found the one of them in Ostia and the other one in Athens, remind the characteristics of the coins of Mithridates VI, following the second idealized portrait type of the king of Pontus, as in both portraits the hairstyle, the shape of the face and the position of the head resemble one another (after 90 B.C.)<sup>86</sup> (Fig. 24-26). However, there is a problem of identification with the head of Athens, as is most associated with the son of Mithridates VI, Ariarathes IX of Cappadocia, whose portraits on his coins strongly resembled that of his father<sup>87</sup> (Fig. 27). Also, a Thasian marble head portrait, which is now in the Venice museum, has been associated with Mithridates VI (Fig. 28). In this occasion the king of Pontus is represented as Helios, wearing a diadem and chiton, following the second type of Mithridates VI coin portraits with more idealized facial features<sup>88</sup>.

#### ➤ Portraits of Mithridates VI on gems

A male in a cuirass, depicted on a sardonyx gem, having curly hair and a *taenia* on his head and wearing a chlamys and a cuirass and with brooches with stars on each of his shoulders, is identified as Mithridates VI (Fig. 29). The fact that amplifies the aspect that on the gem is depicted Mithridates VI, is the dependence on these specific stars above his shoulders, since they were usually depicted on royal and civic coins during Mithridates VI reign<sup>89</sup>.

Another gem, from the British museum, is related to Mithridates VI, since it following the second type of Mithridates VI coins and is comparable to the later

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<sup>84</sup> Fulinska 2012, 72.

<sup>85</sup> Fulinska 2012, 72. However, it is very possible that these two heads may belong to other rulers of Boporus, who follow this type. S. Erciyas 2006, 158.

<sup>86</sup> Erciyas 2006, 151.

<sup>87</sup> Højte 2009, 152.

<sup>88</sup> Erciyas 2006, 156.

<sup>89</sup> Erciyas 2006, 161.

tetradrachms (Fig. 30), despite the fact that it is not proved that this gem depicts surely the king of Pontus<sup>90</sup>.

There are two more gems that can be more safely identified as Mithridates VI. The first one, which is an amethyst ringstone and is now in Florence, resembling the second type of coins, presents a young man with long hair and a diadem, whose tassels are shown on his neck. Not only the diadem was the characteristic symbol of the Hellenistic kings, but also the full cheeks and the distinctive nose are features which fit to the image of Mithridates VI, elements which were commonly depicted to the second portrait type of him (Fig. 31). The second gem is made of yellowish-green glass and the facial characteristics of the young man that it depicts, such as the diadem, the flowing hair, the eyes, the nose and the cheeks, are very similar to the first gem<sup>91</sup> (Fig. 32).

#### ➤ Portraits of Mithridates VI on Delos

Some statue bases, which were found on Delos, reveal that Mithridates VI had several portrait statues on the island<sup>92</sup>. Three from the 50 royal portraits heads, which were erected on Delos between 166 B.C. and 50 B.C., and one headless statue are referred to Mithridates VI despite the fact that they are not well preserved<sup>93</sup>.

The life-size statue, the so called Inopus head, which was found in the Inopus spring<sup>94</sup> and only the upper part of which has survived, has long, full hair and a diadem (Fig. 33)<sup>95</sup>. Despite the fact that it is badly damaged the proximity of the monument near the monument of Mithridates VI and the general features of the head

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<sup>90</sup> Højte 2009, 158.

<sup>91</sup> Erciyas 2006, 151.

<sup>92</sup> Between 166 and 50 B.C. the number of the royal statues was decreased, while the dedications of the Romans and Greeks increased rapidly. Also, the Pontic and the Seleucid kings received a large number of statues on the island such as the Ptolemy's. Another difference in monuments that is mentioned after 166 B.C. was in the nature of the dedications. Before 166 B.C. the dedicated portraits of the kings were commissioned by the city, whereas after 166 B.C. kings and friends of them were the persons who made the dedications. The kings probably constructed their own statues to amplify their propaganda S. Erciyas 2006, 154.

<sup>93</sup> Højte 2009, 152.

<sup>94</sup> It is located below the Samothrakeion, where the monument to Mithridates VI was situated. S. Erciyas 2009, 155.

<sup>95</sup> Højte 2009, 153.

suggest that it was a statue of Mithridates VI and which can be associated with the second coin type of Mithridates VI<sup>96</sup>.

In the sanctuary of Apollo on Delos two portraits of a Hellenistic king and a queen were revealed. Despite the fact that both of the portraits are not well preserved and cannot be surely associated with Mithridates VI and Laodike, some characteristics such as the long hair, the position of the diadem and the setting of the long hair around it bear the images of the early royal coins of Mithridates VI<sup>97</sup> (Fig. 34).

The so-called horned king from Delos, which was found in the Dodekatheon and was connecting by many scholars with Mithridates VI, had horns set close to each other and probably they were goat horns. However, the fact that Mithridates VI was not depicted with horns on his coins, sets some doubts about the association of this portrait with the king of Pontus (Fig. 35)<sup>98</sup>.

A marble headless statue that was found on the island of Delos was identified as Mithridates VI because of an inscription that was revealed in the place of his monument on Delos. Its original height is calculated to 2.15 m., including the base as it probably stood in the cella, and depicts the king of Pontus in military costume with a cuirass and a paludamentum (Fig. 36)<sup>99</sup>.

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### The monument to Mithridates VI on Delos

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The marble monument to Mithridates on Delos was a small rectangular structure measuring 5.20x3.9 m. on the outside and 3.88x1.95 m. on the inside, while the height of the building was estimated at 3.34 m. It was erected around 102/101 B.C. on the north-west side of the sanctuary of the Great Gods of Samothrace, as a striking addition to the older sanctuary, and its back wall was aligned with the sanctuary's back wall, influencing in this way the outward appearance of the place

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<sup>96</sup> Erciyas 2006, 154.

<sup>97</sup> Erciyas 2006, 155.

<sup>98</sup> Erciyas 2006, 156.

<sup>99</sup> Erciyas 2006, 158.



(Fig. 37). Placed right next to the main building and concealing a substantial part of its façade, surely attracted the attention of visitors to the sanctuary<sup>100</sup>.

The south side of the structure was open with two Ionic columns in antae (2.90 m. height) to the square of the sanctuary, supporting a gabled roof between the two antae (Fig. 38). Despite the fact that there is no evidence for cultic activity in connection with the monument<sup>101</sup>, the location of it, however, within the sanctuary to the Dioscuri-Kabeiroi should not be a coincidence, while, during the Hellenistic-Roman periods the Dioscuri-Kabeiroi functioned as symbols of military success and the iconography related to them was therefore used by and for kings<sup>102</sup>.

The sculptural decoration of it was consisted of a display of thirteen portrait-bust inserted in round shields. One of them was placed in the tympanon of the façade and 12 along the inner walls of the Heroon-like building, three along each side wall and six along the back wall (Fig. 39). A mould bench (c. 0.60 m.), running along the inner back wall of the building, not only served for seating, but also was the location of an inscribed statue base mentioning Mithridates VI<sup>103</sup>.

The most prominent place was occupied by an unknown person from Amisos<sup>104</sup>, while the portraits of the inner walls, most of which are lost or badly damaged<sup>105</sup>, are according to the generally accepted reconstruction: on the western wall and from the left is Gaius, son of Hermaeus, from Amisos, *suntrophos* of Mithridates VI, next to him an unknown person, son of Antipater, private secretary of Mithridates VI, and next to him Dorylaos, son of Philetaerus, from Amisos, nephew of Dorylaos Tacticus, an officer of Mithridates VI (Fig. 40). On the opposite eastern wall was a member of the court of the Arsacid king Mithridates II, next an unidentified person and next to him Papias, son of Monophilus, from Amisos, *philos* and chief doctor of Mithridates VI (Fig. 41). The northern back wall includes Diophantus, son of Mithares, from Gazioura, Ariarathes VII of Cappadocia, nephew of

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<sup>100</sup> Erciyas 2006, 135.

<sup>101</sup> Although the main inscription on the architrave refers to the building as *naos*, it is not a religious building in the strict sense of the word, since neither the inscriptions nor the architecture of the monument provide equable evidences for cultic worship of Mithridates VI. S. Kreuz 2009, 142.

<sup>102</sup> Erciyas 2006, 139.

<sup>103</sup> Erciyas 2006, 140.

<sup>104</sup> Erciyas 2006, 142, proposes that the pediment portrait shows Mithridates VI himself, a hypothesis which finds no support in the accompanying inscription.

<sup>105</sup> The fact that the total number of the busts was knocked down and all, except one, are missing suggests that they were on purpose destroyed. S. Erciyas 2006, 140.

Mithridates VI and enthroned as ruler by him, the Seleucid king Antiochus VIII Epiphanes, Asclepiodorus, father of Helianax from Athens, next an unidentified person and finally an official of the Arsacid court (Fig. 42)<sup>106</sup>.

The inscription of the architrave is of central importance in order to understand the monument. It mentions the Athenian Helianax, son of Asclepiodorus, priest of Poseidon and the Kabeiroi at Delos, who erected the monument along with the *agalmata and hoopla ek ton idion*, on behalf of the Athenian and Roman people to the gods of the sanctuary and king Mithridates VI Eupator. In addition, the name Helianax is also mentioned in each inscription, belonging to the portrait medallions and on the statue base<sup>107</sup>.

In this way, it is understood that the construction of the building was neither donation from the king himself, nor initiated by the inner circle of the Pontic court, but contribute to gain consciousness of the outsider's perception of the Pontic king and Mithridates VI kingship. The range of personalities on the Delos monument is representative of the diverse nature of the Pontic kingdom, East and West, as well as the geographical limits of the influence of the kingdom. The appearance of the Greeks and Parthian/Persians is regarded as an expression of the background of Mithridates VI kingship, a central aspect of Mithridates VI identity and ideology, which must have been recognized by Helianax, who undertook the project<sup>108</sup>.

Despite the fact that the architectural form of the building was simple, a single room with basic architectural features, the geographical location, however, of it is especially significant. Far away of the immediate borders of the Pontic kingdom, it was built on one of the most frequently visited islands, Delos. However, it was not planned to be used by the Pontic people to worship Mithridates VI, but the construction of it was a sign of his prominence in the Aegean among the Greeks and the others Hellenistic monarchies. It was built in a period of time, when the Pontic kingdom was a resourceful late Hellenistic kingdom. For the visitor to the sanctuary, the building with its monumental and heterogeneous portrait gallery might have evoked the impression of a cosmopolitan Hellenistic kingdom, reflecting the

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<sup>106</sup> Erciyas 2005, 140-142.

<sup>107</sup> Kreuz 2009, 137.

<sup>108</sup> Kreuz 2009, 138.

international recognition of Mithridates VI and his rule, underlining the perception of his kingship in the Greek world<sup>109</sup>.

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## Epilogue

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The study of the Pontic kingdom of Mithridates VI and his predecessors has given significance evidences about the whole region of the Black Sea during the Hellenistic period. Mithridates I Ctistes proclaimed himself the founder of the Pontic Kingdom and a succession of kings from the same royal family ruled over the area from Herakleia to Trapezus for over two centuries until the reign of Mithridates VI Eupator Dionysus. During these years, the Pontic Kings maintained balanced and had peaceful relations with the neighboring Anatolian Kingdoms and the Hellenistic kingdoms of the East. Although, the relationship between Rome and Pontus was not so friendly, most of the kings managed to establish alliances and maintain the relations with Rome.

The final Pontic king, Mithridates VI, failed to keep good relations with Rome. By 88 B.C. he had expanded the borders of his kingdom from the northern coast of the Black Sea to the southern coast of Asia Minor, the Aegean islands and Greece. It is believed that he was a close follower of Alexander the Great, a fact which is proved in his use of imagery on coinage and sculpture and his ambitious goal of conquest.

The reigns of Mithridates VI and his predecessors resulted in a period characterized by royal ambition and extensive political propaganda. Obviously, the efforts of Mithridates VI to establish a large and powerful kingdom in the 1<sup>st</sup> century B.C., is shown in his promotion of his political image. The increased minting of coins and the number of his sculptural portraits verify his strategy to show off his political image. In order to achieve this goal he tried to use religion and cults in art as a mean of propaganda to strengthen even more his power.

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<sup>109</sup> Kreuz 2009, 137.

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**Figures**

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Fig. 1: Tetradrachm of Mithridates IV and Laodike 160-150 B.C.

(Callataÿ 2009, 77)



Fig. 2: Tetradrachm of Mithridates IV 160-150 B.C.

(Callataÿ 2009, 76)



Fig. 3: Obverse of a tetradrachm of Mithridates VI Eupator 79/8 B.C.

([http://www.wildwinds.com/coins/greece/pontos/kings/mithradates\\_VI/i.html](http://www.wildwinds.com/coins/greece/pontos/kings/mithradates_VI/i.html))

Fig. 4: Obverse of a tetradrachm of Alexander the Great.

(<http://kids.britannica.com/elementary/art-90773/An-ancient-coin-shows-the-head-of-Alexander-the-Great> )



Fig. 5: Realistic Type. Obverse of a tetradrachm of Mithridates VI Eupator 87 B.C.

(<http://www.sylloge-nummorum-graecorum.org/>)

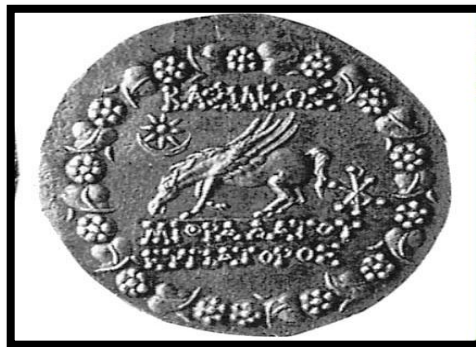


Fig. 6: Realistic Type. Reverse of a tetradrachm of Mithridates VI Eupator with Pegasus 87 B.C.

(<http://www.sylloge-nummorum-graecorum.org/>)



Fig. 7: Idealised Type. Obverse of a tetradrachm of Mithridates VI Eupator as Alexander 87 B.C.

(<http://www.sylloge-nummorum-graecorum.org/>)



Fig. 8: Idealised Type. Reverse of a tetradrachm of Mithridates VI Eupator with a grazing stag 87 B.C.

(<http://www.sylloge-nummorum-graecorum.org/>)



Fig. 9: Reverse of a tetradrachm of Mithridates VI Eupator with a grazing stag, a star and a crescent.

(<http://www.sylloge-nummorum-graecorum.org/>)



Fig. 10: Bronze coin of Mithridates VI Eupator as Dionysus from Amisos 85/65 B.C.

([http://www.wildwinds.com/coins/greece/pontos/kings/mithradates\\_VI/SNGBS\\_1209.jpg](http://www.wildwinds.com/coins/greece/pontos/kings/mithradates_VI/SNGBS_1209.jpg))



Fig. 11: Obol with Athena on the obverse and a prow on the reverse from Panticapaeum 200 B.C.

(<http://www.sylloge-nummorum-graecorum.org/>)



Fig. 12: Pontic type coin with Zeus on the obverse and an eagle on thunderbolt on the reverse from Amisos.

([http://www.roemische-muenzen.net/ArsAeterna/index.php?main\\_page=product\\_info&cPath=33&products\\_id=362&language=en](http://www.roemische-muenzen.net/ArsAeterna/index.php?main_page=product_info&cPath=33&products_id=362&language=en) )





Fig. 13: Coin from Amisos with Artemis on the obverse and a grazing stag on the reverse 100 B.C.

(<http://www.sylloge-nummorum-graecorum.org/>)



Fig. 14: Coin from Chersonesus with Artemis on the obverse and a standing stag on the reverse 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C.

(<http://www.sylloge-nummorum-graecorum.org/>)



Fig. 15: The so-called 'Schwarzeberger Alexander' in München Glyptotek.

(<http://wissen.de.msn.com/history/hyphen-43?page=4>)





Fig. 16: Tetradrachm of Mithridates VI, 120-63 B.C.

([http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Tetradrachm\\_of\\_Mithridates\\_VI\\_CM\\_SNG\\_BM\\_1038.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Tetradrachm_of_Mithridates_VI_CM_SNG_BM_1038.jpg))



Fig. 17: Statue of Heracles in the Vatican Museum.

([http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:0\\_Hercule\\_et\\_T%C3%A9l%C3%A9phos\\_-\\_Mus%C3%A9e\\_Chiaramonti\\_-\\_Vatican.JPG](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:0_Hercule_et_T%C3%A9l%C3%A9phos_-_Mus%C3%A9e_Chiaramonti_-_Vatican.JPG))



Fig. 18: Portrait of Mithridates VI in lion *exuviae* in the Louvre Museum.

(<http://en.daringtodo.com/2011/03/ritratti-del-potere-la-comunicazione-politica-ai-tempi-di-roma/>)

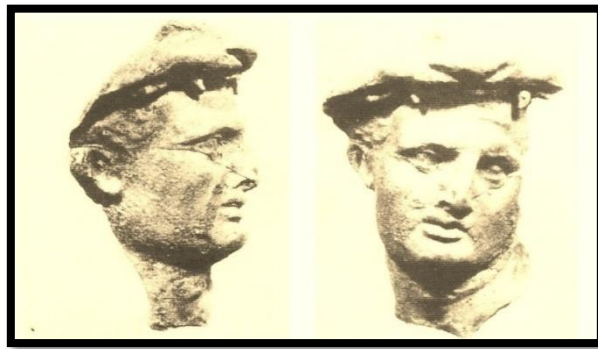


Fig. 19: Terracotta head in lion *exuviae* found in Sinope.

(Højte 2009,151)



Fig. 20: The Prometheus group in Pergamum.

([http://www.livius.org/ap-ark/appian/appian\\_mithridatic\\_21.html](http://www.livius.org/ap-ark/appian/appian_mithridatic_21.html))



Fig. 21: Heracles with portrait features from the Prometheus group in Pergamum.

(<http://www.superstock.com/stock-photos-images/1848-115377>)

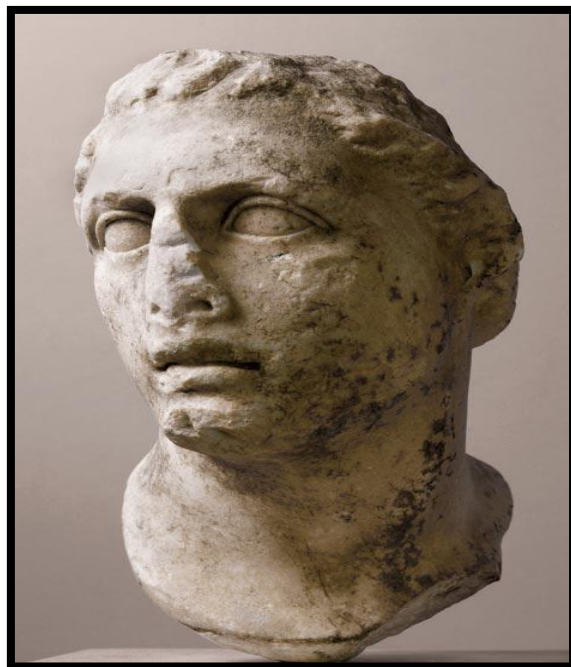


Fig. 22: Mithridates VI portrait from Panticapaeum, in St. Petersburg.

([http://www.hermitage.nl/en/pers/alexander\\_de\\_grote/beeldmateriaal.htm](http://www.hermitage.nl/en/pers/alexander_de_grote/beeldmateriaal.htm))



Fig. 23: Portrait in Odessa Museum.

(<http://open.conted.ox.ac.uk/resources/images/images-week-2-twelve-caesars-course>)



Fig. 24-26: The Ostia Mithridates VI.

(Højte2009, 153)



Fig. 27: The Athens Mithridates VI.

([http://www.livius.org/es-ez/eumenes/eumenes\\_ii\\_soter.html](http://www.livius.org/es-ez/eumenes/eumenes_ii_soter.html))



Fig. 28: The Venice Helios.

(Erciyas 2006, 157)



Fig. 29: Portrait of Mithridates VI on a gem.

(Erciyas 2006, 161)



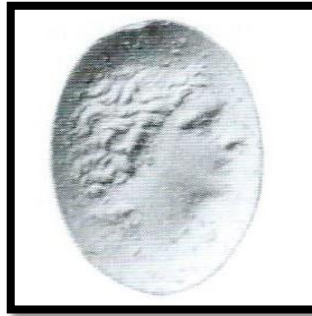


Fig. 30: Gem in the British Museum with portrait comparable to the portraits on the later tetradrachms.

(Højte 2009, 158)



Fig. 31-32: Gem portraits.

(Erciyas 2006, 150)

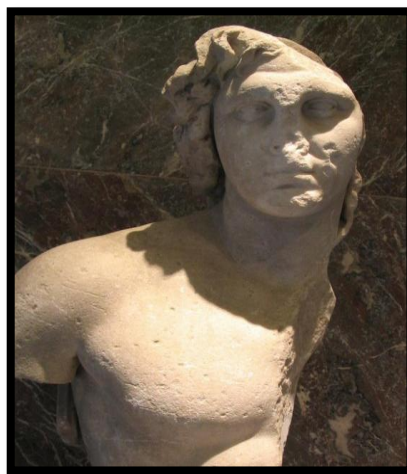


Fig. 33: The Inopus king from Delos.

(<http://www.livius.org/category/greece/>)



Fig. 34: Mithridates VI head portrait from the sanctuary of Apollo on Delos.

(Erciyas 2006, 156)



Fig. 35: The horned king from Delos.

(Erciyas 2006, 156)



Fig. 36: Delos, Sanctuary of the Kaberoi. Base of Mithridates VI and headless statue.

(Højte 2009, 157)

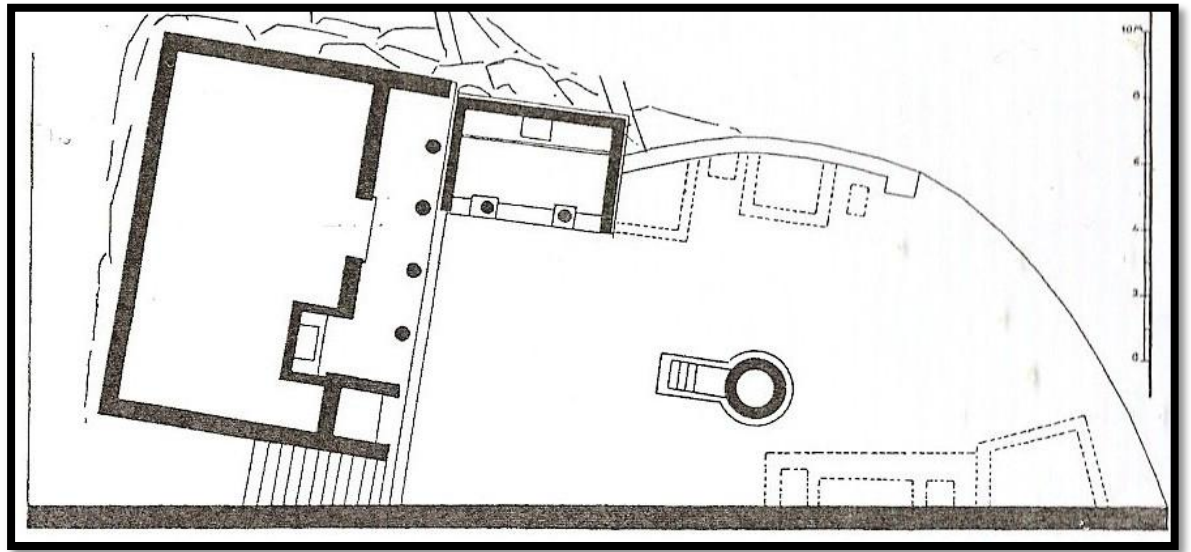


Fig. 37: Plan of the sanctuary of the Kabeiroi with the monument  
to Mithridates VI.  
(Kreuz 2009, 135)

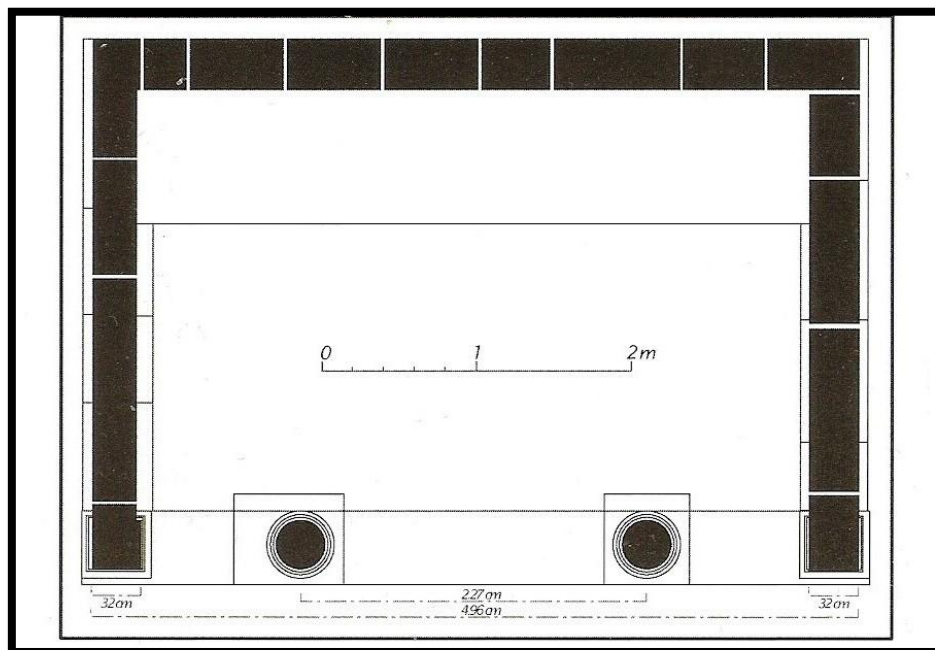


Fig. 38: The ground plan of the monument to Mithridates VI on Delos.  
(Erciyas 2006, 138)



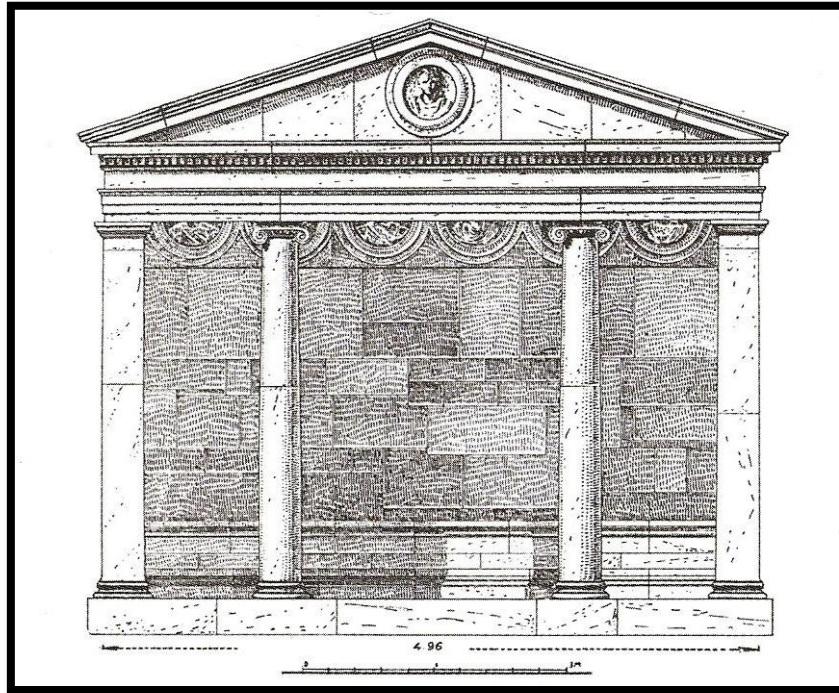


Fig. 39: A reconstruction drawing of the monument to Mithridates VI on Delos.

(Erciyas 2006, 138)

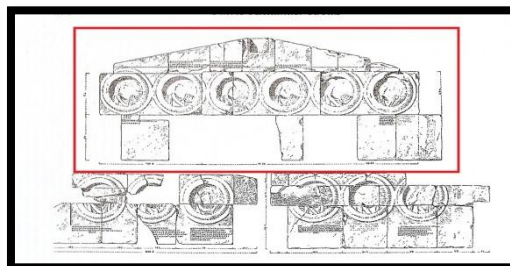
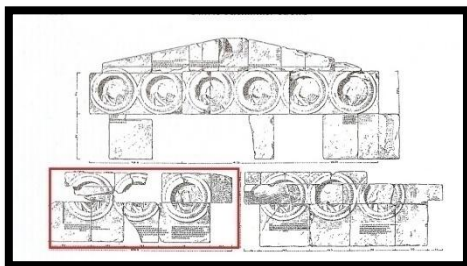
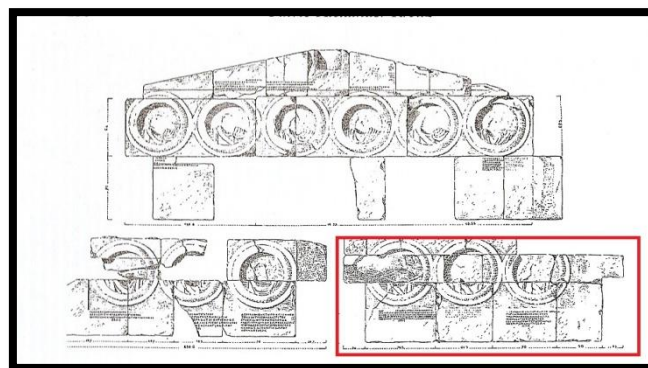


Fig. 40-42: The portrait-medallions of the inner walls.

(Kreuz 2009, 138)

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### Acronyms

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BSS: Black Sea Studies

CP: Colloquia Pontica

JHS: Journal of Hellenic Studies

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