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Ancient Tragedy and the Interpretation of the Historical Present: Experience of the King Artavazd II

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The paper is intended to study the "Life of Crassus" by Plutarch, particularly, those fragments that concern the history of Greater Armenia under Artavazd II (55-34 BC.). International relations of the age have been discussed in light of Hellenistic and Roman juridical concepts of "friend" and "ally". The fact is especially underlined that Tigran II was in a friendly relationship simultaneously with Rome and Parthia in the last period of his reign. First of all, it demanded of him not to support one super-state against the other.

However, Romans frequently "confused" this kind of relationship and identified it with that which was demanded by allies who were obliged to support them with material means and military forces. This kind of confusion is traceable during the Parthian company of Crassus (54-53 BC.). The triumvir tried to force Artavazd II to pay the obligations of an ally. The King declined the proposal and kept the side of the Parthian king Orodes II. At the same time, he refused to undertake any action against the Romans. Both kings agreed that Crassus acted with egoistic goals and did not express the will of the Roman People (Populus Romanus).

This idea was laid under the "Artaxata performance" where Crassus was identified with the hero Euripides' "Bacchae" – Prince Pentheus whose frantic actions caused his death at the hands of Dionysus. This must be estimated as a message to Rome to restore friendly and just relations.

Անտիկ թատրոնը և պատմական ներկայի մեկնաբանությունը. Արտավազդ Բ արքայի փորձառությունը

Ալբերտ Ստեփանյան

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ԵՊՀ պատմության ֆակուլտետ, համաշխարհային պատմության ամբիոն, պատմական գիտությունների դոկտոր, պրոֆեսոր,

Հիմնաբառեր: Արիստոտել, Եվրիպիդես, Արտավազդ II արքա, անտիկ թատրոնի տեսություն, ողբերգության և պատմագրության հարաբերությունը, Կրասսուսի արևելյան արշավանքը։

Հոդվածը խնդիր ունի ուսումնասիրելու Պլուտարքոսի «Կրասուսի կենսագրությունը», ի մասնավորի՝ դրա այն հատվածները, որք վերաբերվում են Մեծ Հայքին ընդ իշխանությամբ Արտավազդ Բ արքայի (55-34)։ Դարաշրջանի միջազգային հարաբերությունները դիտարկվում են համաձայն հելլենիստական և հռոմեական իրավաքաղաքական հասկացությունների՝ «բարեկամ» և «դաշնակից»։ Ուշադրություն է հրավիրվում այն իրողության վրա, որ տակավին Տիգրան Բ–ի վերջին շրջանից Մեծ Հայքը գտնվում է բարեկամական հարաբերությունների մեջ ինչպես Հռոմի, այնպես էլ Պարթևստանի հետ։ Հարաբերություններ, որք կողմերից նախ և առաջ պահանջում էին չգործել միմյանց դեմ. գործում էր «ով մեր դեմ չէ՝ բարեկամ է» սկզբունքը։

Սակայն հռոմեացիները հաճախ «շփոթում էին» նման հարաբերությունները և նույնացնում դաշնակցային հարաբերություններին, որ պայմանագրյալ կողմից պահանջում էին փաստացի կախվածություն՝ ռազմական, նյութական, դիվանագիտական օժանդակության պայմանով։ Այսօրինակ «շփոթման» հանդիպում ենք Կրասսուսի պարթևական արշավանքի ժամանակ (54-53), երբ Արտավազդ Բ–ից պահանջվում էին ստորակա դաշնակցին պատշաճող ծառայություններ։ Արքան մերժեց դրանք, և հարեց պարթև Օրոդես Բ–ին, միաժամանակ, սակայն, խուսափեց հակահռոմեական ուղղակի գործողություններից։ Երկուսն էլ մեկնարկում էին այն գաղափարից, որ Կրասսուսը ինքնակամ է և չի արտահայտում հռոմեական ազգի (populus Romanus) հավաքական կամքը։

Այս գաղափարն էլ դրված էր «արտաշատյան թատերական ներկայացման» հիմքում, որտեղ հռոմեական եռապետը նույնացվում էր Եվրիպիդեսի «Բաքոսուհիների» Պենթևս արքային, որի խելագուրկ գործողությունները հանգեցրին նրա կործանմանը։ Սա հստակ ուղերձ էր առ Հռոմ՝ առաջարկով վերականգնելու բարեկամական, արդար և օրինական հարաբերությունները։

Античный театр и осмысление исторического настоящего: опыт царя Артавазда II

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Ключевые слова: Аристотель, Еврипид, царь Артавазд II, теория античного театра, взаимоотношения трагедии и историографии, Восточная компания Красса.

Цель статьи - исследование «Жизни М. Красса», принадлежащей перу греческого историографа и моралиста Плутарха. Речь идет, в частности, о тех ее фрагментах, которые относятся к Великой Армении в период правления царя Артавазда II (55-34). Международные отношения данной эпохи рассматриваются в свете эллинистических и римских политическо-правовых понятий - «друг» и «союзник». Обращается внимание на тот факт, что, начиная с последних лет правления Тиграна II Великая Армения находилась в дружественных отношениях одновременно как с Римом, так и с Парфией. Подобные отношения требовали от сторон, в первую очередь, не действовать друг против друга. Этот же принцип был сформулирован в виде максимы: «кто не против нас, тот друг».

Однако римляне частенько «смешивали» понятие друг с понятием союзник. Последнее требовало подчинения партнера римским интересам с обязательством оказывать им военную, материальную и дипломатическую поддержку. Такого рода «смещение» мы встречаем в период парфянского похода Красса (54-53), когда от царя армянского требовались услуги, подобающие союзнику. Он отклонил их и склонился к сотрудничеству с парфянским царем Ородом II. При этом, однако, он не принимал участия в антиримских акциях последнего. Оба царя исходили из той идеи, что Красс действовал самовольно и не отражал волю римского народа (populus Romanus).

Идея эта была заложена в основу «арташатского театрального представления», где римский триумвир идентифицировался с царем Фив Пенфеем (трагедия Еврипида «Вакханки»), чье безумие привело к его страшной гибели. Это было четкое послание к Риму с призывом восстановить дружественные и законные взаимоотношения.

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Introduction: The age of Hellenism (325-30BC.) with empires and sacred royal power, strong social hierarchy and state machinery, syncretic ideologies, religious systems, massive cultural complexes, and standards of social behavior shaped the image of humble men who sought life stability in their *immediate social solidarity* composed of small autonomous city-oases in the ocean of great empires.[1] Contrary to them, groups of intellectuals came to afore being concentrated in eminent centers of scholarship and aesthetics – Alexandria, Antioch, Pergamon, Athens, and Syracuse. Despite royal patronage, in common, they were free of ideological clichés and shaped their fundamental and aesthetic concepts under *pure creative pursuit* – Zenodotus of Ephesus, Eratosthenes of Cyrene, Hipparchus, Herophilus Euclides, Archimedes, Callimachus, Apollonius of Rhodes, and many others.[2]

A similar situation was obvious in philosophy. Along with fundamental differences, the leading schools of the age - Stoicism, Skepticism, and Epicureanism, Cynicism - showed some obvious common

[1] Kings passed their will to the cities through *letters*. **Tarn**, 1952, 66-78; **Ehrenberg**, 1964, 191-205. The network of relations between the city and Hellenistic kings are formulated as "divine honours for the king in exchange for benefactions and privileges for the city." **Strootman R.**, 2011, 150. The nucleus element of this solidarity was the family now more flexible according to the new life conditions. The city solidarity was based on "individualism and brotherhood". **Tarn**, 1952, 68; cf. **Thompson**, 2006, 101-104.

[2] Scholars trace in royal patronage a more profound phenomenon of the relationship between culture and political power. On this problem see the research essay of **Stevens K.**, 2019, 1-32; cf. **Erskine A.**, 1995, 38-48; cf. **Luce,** 1988, 27-38.

features.[1] All of them were engaged in the *philosophy of life*. This referred primarily to an activity, which implied a logical choice of a person aimed at freedom from disturbance (ἀταραξία) and intention to individual happiness (εὐδαιμονία). These two goals were considered in strict connection with pleasure (ἡδονή) - both logical and emotional.[2] However, this high elitist position was contrasted with the popular position which recognized Tyche and the gods as dramatists of the *life performance* of Hellenistic men.[3] In other words, in the same cultural area, two opposite paradigms faced each other - a creative-elitist and algorithmic-popular.

Certainly, this contrast was quite traceable in Hellenistic theatre as well. On the one hand, it continued the tradition of Classical tragedy and its social ideals while staging the works of great playwrights, on the other hand, it gave way to new comedy and drama based on everyday values: family stories, plays of Fortuna, funny situations, unexpected encounters, conflicts of interests, happy ends, etc.[4] They caused pleasure to the audience who lived with earthly problems and sentiments. The most prominent figure of this genre was Menander who influenced the early Roman authors [Sandbach, 1992, 669-670]. However, besides theatres, performances were also staged in royal courts with a sophisticated entourage [Russel, 1982, 1-7; Russell, 1987, 49-51].[5] Here, classical tragedies were preferred.

The court community showed (or pretended to show) its commitment to a contemplative lifestyle and orientation to Archaic and Classical values and ideals. In this regard, old tragedies began to be evaluated as markers of the high social status of the elite. They were staged in the courts to recreate the solidarity of elite groups through new (and ad hoc) interpretations of old tragic plots.

Even our meager information about the court of Hellenistic Greater Armenia suggests that its activities proceeded according to the same elitist principle. In this country, this principle had to be more effective to compensate for the underdeveloped network of urban centers and the lack of numerous Greek (and other) settlers. We must remember the fact that the vast majority of the population of Armenia were peasants who lived in local communities with local customary law and religion.[6]

Under Tigran II (95-55 BC.) and his son and successor Artavazd II (55-34 BC.), some outstanding intellectuals lived at the court - rhetoricians, philosophers, and playwrights. The most prominent of them were Metrodorus of Scepsis and Amphicrates of Athens. Under their supervision, the young prince Artavazd was brought up.[7]

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[1] On these schools' organization, structure, and relationship, see **Donaldi**, 1999, 55-62.

[2] Hedonistic approach to human lifestyle was particularly effective in Epicurean ethics. See **Erler**, 1999, 651-657.

[3] "The perception of life as a drama and diffusion of other dramatic similes in Greek thought are directly related to the increasing popularity of theatrical performances, first in classical Athens and later in the Hellenistic world." **Chaniotis**, 1997, 220.

[4] As a rule, these situations developed through opposite characters: good-evil, old-young, freeman-slave, clever-foolish, benevolent-selfish, generous-miser. Cf. **Gutzwiller**, 54-55.

[5] In this view, we must take into consideration that court life was theatricalized: starting from the king's appearances to their receptions, councils, and banquettes. The ruler was thought of as an actor. **Chaniotis**, 1997, 235-245.

[6] The same phenomenon is also traceable in ancient Georgia. See **De Jong**, 2015, 119-128.

[7] Plutarch's formula about Metrodorus is quite noticeable: "a man of agreeable speech and wide learning" [Plut., Luc., 22, 2].

Ancient historians mention two scenes of theatrical performances in Greater Armenia. Talking about the new capital, Tigranakert, among other buildings, Plutarch mentions the theatre [Plut., Luc., Plut., Luc., XXIX, 4]. Bearing in mind that the capital was considered the model of the empire of Tigran the Great, we can conclude that the theatre was designed to consolidate the citizens of different nationalities - Armenians, Greeks, Adiabeni, Assyrians, Gordyeni, Cappadocians, etc. [Plut., Luc., XVI,1; cf. Strabo, XII, 2,9, App., *Mithr.*, 67; Dio Cass., XXXVI, 2 2].[1] And the Greek language and the great classical dramas (along with legislation, economy, and religion) were thought of as the means to reach the *sympoliteia* of the capital [Саркисян, 1955, 56-57]. On the other hand, the same author tells about the court performance held in Artaxata on the occasion of the victory over the army of Crassus which happened in the steppes of North Mesopotamia in 53 BC. [Plut., Crass., XXXIII] [Badian, 1992, 295].

In this research essay, we purport to demonstrate the application of the plot of Euripides' well-known tragedy for the interpretation of current historical events. The events concern the Parthian campaign of Marcus Licinius Crassus of 54-53 BC., the plot represented the "Bacchae" of the eminent dramatist.

Historical Background: In 66 BC, Gn. Pompey and Tigran the Great signed the so-called Artaxata Treaty. The sides agreed that the king would give up his empire while securing the status of a regional state for Greater Armenia, whose influence extended from the Caucasus Mountains to Northern Mesopotamia. He retained the title of "king of kings" and was recognized as a *friend of the Roman people* (amicus populi Romani).[2] However, the end of the king's rule also saw a significant metamorphosis in Armeno-Parthian relations. The Parthian king Phraates III wrote to Tigran II while informing him that he "[…] wishes the Armenian ruler to survive so that in case of need he might someday have him as an ally against the Romans. They both understood that whichever of them should conquer the other would simply help along matters for the Romans and would become easier for them to subdue. For these reasons, then, they were reconciled" [Dio Cass., XXXVII, 7, 4]. Pompeius was, of course, informed of Tigran's policy of double friendship but he did nothing about it.[3]

Artavazd II came to power with this principal understanding of the position of Greater Armenia. A man of vast knowledge, he was versed in Hellenistic and Roman international law which formulated friendship (amicitia) first as the duty of a state not to act against its partner's interests. It was not obliged to

[1] We can propose that each community lived autonomously in its district (σταθμός) separated from the others by internal walls. The central part of the capital was designed for common use, particularly, religious rituals and popular Assembly. See **Stepanyan**, 2012, 86–88.

[2] At the same time, the sides agreed on an indemnity of six thousand talents. However, it had to be paid from the treasuries of Sophene, which now had to separate from Greater Armenia and form a kingdom under the rebellious son of Tigran II - Tigran the Younger. In other words, the old king did not formally pay an indemnity, instead, he donated money to Roman officers and soldiers as befitted a friend of the Roman people. See **Stepanyan**, 2012, 123–124.

[3] The situation of the double friendship – both with Parthia and Rome – would reach its completion in 66 AD., when Greater Armenia, now a close partner of Parthia, after ten years of war, entered analogical relations with Rome. Its king Trdat I arrived in Rome and was crowned by Nero with a solemn ceremony. This settlement secured a long peace and stability in the East. See **Ստեփանյան**, 2012, 138–139; **Stepanyan, Minasyan**, 2018, 335-345.

provide a friend with material or military support but could do that only at its discretion - coming from its motives and interests.[1] Meanwhile, this was the characteristic of the other category of interstate relations – the *ally of the Roman people* (socius populi Romani).

Often Roman politicians "mingled" these two categories, introducing the mixed term "*friend and ally of the Roman people*" (amicus et socius populi Romani). This was done to equalize friends with allies.

Regarding Greater Armenia, this mingling started still Pompey. According to Dio Cassius, in 65-64, in his castra hiberna, while writing a report to Rome, he enrolled Tigran II "among friends and allies" [Dio Cass., LIII, 5,3]. This was done in the spirit of Roman diplomatic practice, which (beginning from the second century BC.) recognized all other states and peoples as real or potential clients.[2]

Such an intention is quite traceable in the relations between Rome and Great Armenia during the Parthian campaign of M. L. Crassus. This caused a *misunderstanding* between the triumvir and the new Armenian king Artavazd II.

Crassus' eastern campaign (54-53 BC.): M. L. Crassus was one of the most influential politicians of the last generation of the Roman Republic. With Julius Caesar and Gn. Pompey set up the so-called First Triumvirate in 60 BC. It was an unofficial coalition of the three powerful men of Rome who were supported correspondingly by the plebs, army, and financial circles. They put themselves above all citizens to "make themselves masters of the state" and "heal its ailment".[3] Renewed their agreement in 56 BC. and even (again informally) divided the Empire into spheres of influence. Endowed with an extraordinary authority (imperium maius) to wage wars and sign treaties Crassus claimed the East: even a rumor rose in Rome that "[…] he would not consider Syria nor even Parthia as the boundaries of his success, but thought to make the campaigns of Lucullus against Tigranes and those of Pompey against Mithridates seem mere child's play, and flew on the wings of his hopes as far as Bactria and India and the Outer Sea" [Plut., Crass., XVI, 2].[4]

In 54 BC., he arrived in Syria and initiated preparations for the great military action against Parthia.[5] He counted on Roman friends and allies in the East and particularly on Greater Armenia. The king of this realm, Artawazd II, visited Crassus and proposed solid military support: "And most of all, Artabazes the king of Armenia gave him courage, for he came to his camp with 6000 horsemen. These were said to be the king's guards and couriers; but he promised 10 000 mail-clad horsemen besides, and 30 000 footmen, to be maintained at his own cost. And he tried to persuade Crassus to invade Parthia by way of Armenia, for thus he would not only lead his forces along in the midst of plenty, which the king

[1] On this category of interstate relations of the Roman Republic see **Neumann**, 1894, 1832-1834; cf. **Marshall**, 1968, 46-49; **Braud**, 1984, 39-54.

[2] On this long and complicated process see **Badian**, 1958, 66-71; cf. **Սուխիանյան**, 2012, 125–128,

[3] Collegia *triumviri* were usual institutions in the Roman Republic for settling specific problems. Cf. **Cadoux**, 1992, 1096. However, under Caesar, Pompey and Crassus, it obtained features of military dictatorship like that of P. C. Sulla (81-79 BC.). See in detail **von Ungern-Sternberg,** 2004, 89-92; **Santangelo**, 2006, 71-80. In both cases, the actors spoke about the restoration of the *old and good Republic*. **Brennan**, 2004, 35-38.

[4] Most probably, in his mind, the myth about the Indian campaign of Dionysus was active [cf. Diodor., II, 38,3; Strabo, XI, 5, 5, XV, 1, 7-9]. Later on, it would be the leading motive for G. J. Caesar's plans for the Easter campaign.

[5] On the strategic plan and details of the Parthian campaign of Crassus see **Debevoise**,1968, 70-95; **Shahbazi**, 1990, 9-13; **Bivar**, 2006, 48-56.

himself would provide, but would also proceed with safety, confronting the cavalry of the Parthians, in which lay their sole strength, with many mountains, and continuous crests, and regions where the horse could not well serve. Crassus was tolerably well pleased with the king's zeal and with the splendid reinforcements which he offered but said he should march through Mesopotamia, where he had left many brave Romans. Upon this, the Armenian rode away" [Plut., Crass., XIX, 1-3].

Plutarch does not reveal the real background of these diplomatic talks. Meanwhile, it is quite obvious in light of former relations between Artaxata and Rome. The fact is that the Armenian king considered himself a friend of the Roman people and outlined his conditions of participation in Crassus' military action: asserted readiness to support the triumvir while having real guarantees of his success. As for Crassus, he thought of the king as an ally of the Roman people obliged to support him by all (material and military) means.

In 53 BC, the Parthian king Orodes II invaded Greater Armenia, and Artawazd II turned to Crassus to come and route the Parthians with joint efforts. This proposal was also denied. Moreover, the Roman general began charging the king with treachery, threatening that "another time he would come and punish Artavasdes for treachery" [Plut., Crass., 19,3].[1]

Meanwhile, Crassus led his legions through the steppes and deserts of North Mesopotamia in the direction of Seleucia. The Parthian king sent his second army under the eminent nobleman Surena to meet him. At Carrhae, Surena surrounded the Roman army and forced it to surrender. Over 20,000 soldiers were killed, and 10,000 were imprisoned with the aquilae – golden standards of legions [Plut., Crass., XXXI, 7].[2] As for Crassus, he was captured and beheaded. His head and right hand were sent to the Parthian king who was at that time in Artaxata, the capital of Greater Armenia. This disaster ended the first serious military conflict between the two empires. Above all, the battle revealed the difference between the two military strategies: on the one hand, the Roman heavy infantry, and on the other hand, the Parthian horse archers and cataphracts.[3] In a deeper sense, it was the opposition of two civilizations - the strong-static and mobile-flexible.

Carrhae: the image of an enemy

a. the Parthians in Roman assessment.

Scholars often bypass this aspect, meanwhile, it is quite important for the complex interpretation of the problem. Assessing the enemy, Plutarch proceeds from two opposite dimensions. The first is the traditional image of a barbarian – shifty and hypocritical, cruel and treacherous. These features one can

[1] This is the other expression of the fact of how Crassus spread his absolute authority on the Roman East. See **Asdourian**, 1911, 60; **Sherwin-White**, 1984, 286.

[2] On the Parthian military strategy and tactics see in detail **Overtoom**, 2017, 103-118.

[3] See **Rawson**, 1982, 543-549. Scholars usually underscore the vagueness of Plutarch's narrative on the Carrhae catastrophe while emphasizing the mythical nature of the author's narrative. See **Braud**, 1993, 468-471. Meanwhile, some other scholars suggest specific writers (such as Nicolaus Damascus, Q. Dellius, Timagenes, Strabo, Asinus Pollio, and C. Cassius) who may have provided Plutarch with information about the battle. They may have contained eye-witness accounts of the Greeks at Carrhae, or the surviving captive Romans. See **Zadorojniy**, 1997, 169-182 (esp. 171-172).

trace not only in Artavazd II but also in other *barbarians* involved in the Parthian war: the Arab chieftain Ariamnes - "a crafty and treacherous man" [Ibid., XXI, 1]; the local Greek Andromachus - " the most faithless of all men"[Ibid.,]; the Parthian king Orodes II - a coward who "was in great fear of the danger which threatened" [Ibid., XXI, 5] Even the general Surena, about whom the author speaks with delight, has also base features: was treacherous and acted "a shameful violence" and killed Crassus while starting talks on the conditions of the truce [Ibid., XXX, 3].[1]

The second dimension, according to Plutarch, expresses the feelings of the Roman plebs, who saw in Parthia a state that did not break good relations with Rome. This is most evident in the scene of Crassus' departure: "And when Ateius, one of the tribunes of the people, threatened to oppose his leaving the city, and a large party arose which was displeased that anyone should go out to wage war on men who had done the state no wrong, but were in treaty relations with it […]" [Ibid., XVI, 3]. Only Pompey with his high authority and influence opened the gates and allowed Grasses to get out of the City and join his army on the way to the East. In this regard, it is also noticeable the following: subsequently, such views gave rise to the famous formula of the Roman Stoics: "Man is a race, it has itself species: Greeks, Romans, Parthians." [Seneca, Ep., LVIII, 12].[2] In a word, the Roman mind demonstrated an obvious intention to neutralize negative colors in the portrait of its principal opponent. However, the two assessments of Parthians existed in parallel.

b. The Romans in Parthian assessment.

Contacts between Parthia and Rome started at the beginning of the 1st century BC. An outstanding Roman military and political actor L. C. Sulla came to the East to settle the problem of Cappadocia and demonstrate the leading role of Rome in the region. The Parthian king sent his ambassador to him to start talks on friendship. It happened in 92 BC. However, Sulla arranged the negotiation scenario in such a way as to make it clear that he would not allow an equal partnership between Parthia and Rome [Plut., Sulla, 5, 4; cf. Liv., Epit., LXX; Cf. Babnis, 2017, 7-8].

As a result, in the future, black-and-white contrasts would dominate between the two world states. And the Parthian campaign of Crassus was the best confirmation of this idea. In this view, we decided to interpret the so-called mockery procession (πομπήν γελοίαν) that the Parthian general Surena produced after his victory over the Roman triumvir. The crowd moved from Carrhae to Seleucia and finished the ritual with great and gruesome pomp, which he "insultingly called a triumph". Plutarch describes it in detail:

> *"That one of his captives who bore the greatest likeness to Crassus, Caius Paccianus, put on a woman's royal robe, and under instructions to answer to the name of Crassus and the title of Imperator when so addressed, was conducted along on horseback. Before him rode trumpeters and a few lictors borne on camels; from the fasces of the lictors, purses were suspended, and to their*

[1] Such an approach is thought to be the result of the intrinsic connection between theatre and history that can be traced in the role of the pro ta gonist. See **Laskarēs** 1923, 163-164.

[2] Before that, of course, the epoque of Augustus with its cultural (and specific diplomatic) achievements had already paved the way for this understanding. See **Debevoise**, 1968, 209-213. The peace achieved by Augustus was the subject of praise by the Roman poets [Horat., Carm., IV, 5, 25-28, 14, 9, Propert., El., V, 69-83, etc.]. Cf. **Babnis**, 2017, 18-26.

axes were fastened Roman heads newly cut off; behind these followed courtesans of Seleucia, musicians, who sang many scurrilous and ridiculous songs about the effeminacy and cowardice of Crassus" [Plut., Crass., 32, 2].

The procession represented a set of pictorial fragments linked together to express the character and actions of the enemy, Crassus, who violated the general order through his avarice and low passions. This idea was formulated under the axiology and worldview of Persian mythology and religion, Zoroastrianism. In a deeper sense, the procession demonstrated typological parallels with the Sassanian bas-reliefs on military clashes with the Romans. On the other hand, it showed features of a typical Dionysian procession that preceded the theatre.

A similar approach is well attested in numerous Iranian bas-reliefs of the Sasanian period – at Naqsh-i Rostam, Bišapur, Taq-i Bostan, Tang-i Chogan, etc.[1] Later, such a *plastic mode* of understanding and representing the past gave birth to the Iranian historical epic the *Šāhnāma*. As a rule, these bas-reliefs depict conflict situations with a white-and-black polarity. The Iranian side represents the white pole (us), whereas their enemies designate the black one (them). *We* are righteous and virtuous, brave and generous; therefore, our gods endow us with great victories and glory. As for our enemies, *they* are unjust and effeminate, selfish and avaricious [Cf. Cohen, 2012, 115-118]; and their defeat and humiliation support the cosmic order. This is an interpretation of history according to the common Zoroastrian perception of the world as a stage of conflict between eternal Good and Evil.[2] In this regard, the example of the rock reliefs of Shapur I (239-270) is very notable. The reliefs at Naqsh-i Rustam and Bišapur depict the king of kings triumphant over three Roman emperors – Gordian III, Philip the Arab, and Valerian. He is on horseback led by Glory (**Farah*) while the emperors are on foot as "standing Roman," "prostrated Roman," and "suppliant Roman."[3]

The general Surena began from this basic idea and presented Crassus as the embodiment of Evil who would be sacrificed to restore harmony in the cosmos. In other words, the addressee of the mockery procession was the Parthian (multinational) crowd. Scholars similarly agree that when the geo-social boundaries of the given community are challenged the influence of rituals increases as they are aimed at the restoration of the integrity and validity of the community [Cf. Cohen, 2012, 119-122]. The point is that the community serves as the real hero of the ritual. From this point of view, the following is very suggestive; Plutarch ends his description of the procession by emphasizing that "these things were for all

[1] **MacDermot**, 1954, 76-80; **Herrman G.**, 2000, 35-45; **Canepa M. P.**, 2010, 582-584. However, caution is required in applying Sasanian materials to the Parthian period. It must be taken into account that the Sassanians were edgier in various areas of politics - religious, cultural, military, and foreign.

[2] In other words, the events were considered within the framework of a great mystic ritual that did not tolerate any significant innovation: "The whole point about ritual is that it should always be the same: its performance aims to repeat the rigmarole as perfectly, as identically as possible," **Taplin**, 2005, 118.

[3] **Canepa**, 2009, 62-75; **Mackenzie, Howell**, 1989, 18-23. The warship of Farah (Փառք) was spread in pre-Christian Armenia. In the Christian period, it was still active. See **Garsoïan**, 1971, 304-306.

to see" (ταῦτά μὲν οὖν πάντες ἐθεῶντο) [Plut., Crass., 32, 3]. In other words, public participation and perception constituted the main aspect of this mixed religious and political ritual.[1]

However, over time, the Parthian rigor towards the Romans softened. The first explicit expression of this metamorphosis can be traced in the conversations of 1 AD, when the heir of Augustus, G. Caesar, arrived in the East and began to negotiate with the new Parthian king Phraates V about the border of the Euphrates.[2] Historian V. Paterculus, who participated in this action, describes it in detail:

> *"On an island in the Euphrates, with an equal retinue on each side, Gaius had a meeting with the king of the Parthians, a young man of distinguished presence. This spectacle of the Roman army arrayed on one side, the Parthian on the other, while these two eminent lands not only of the empires they represented but also of mankind thus met in the conference — truly a notable and a memorable sight […]" [Vel. Pat., II, 101, 1-2; Cf. Edwell, 2013, 204-205].*

To put it differently, the sides recognized their parity and marked the Euphrates as the boundary. Nearly the same approach is traceable in the well-known formula of the Parthian king Vologes I uttered in his message to Nero on the occasion of the victory over the Roman army in the ten-year war (54-64 AD.): "He had sufficiently demonstrated his power; he had also given an example of his clemency" [Tacit., Ann., XXIV, 1]. This means that (like the Romans) the Parthian elite also demonstrated two opposite models of relation to their civilization opponent. The second model gained importance as one of the sides became familiar with the power of the other.

In the text of Plutarch, all the discussed models were included in a wider perception of history, which considered it according to the canons of ancient tragedy.[3]

Tragic history: The second genre of interpretative performance occurs at the Armenian court in Artaxata. According to Plutarch's narrative, the Parthian and Armenian kings, Orodes II and Artawazd II, have reconciled and come to terms. As a result, the Armenian princess (the daughter of Tigran II and the sister of Artawazd II) was married off by her brother to the Parthian prince Pacorus. The highest military and administrative elite of both Parthia and Greater Armenia participated in the wedding banquet, expecting the wedding party to uncover the *profound rational meaning* of the great victory.

The subsequent narrative makes it clear that the party was directed in accordance with a well-elaborated plot. Plutarch clarifies that the audience, particularly the two kings, was well acquainted with the Greek language, literature, and customs [Plut., Crass., XXXIII, 2].[4] This familiarity with Greek

[1] The like rituals are thought of to be purposed for the recreation of communities in a specific social space and time. On their typology and social significance see in detail **Goodin**, 1978, 282-291.

[2] Scholars think that this cardinal change in the foreign policy of the states was prepared by the treaty of 20 BC. signed by the initiative of Augustus. See **Ziegler,** 1964, 53-56.

[3] Scholars find this approach a characteristic feature of Plutarch's interpretation of the lives of his heroes. See **de Lacy**, 1952, 159-164; **Papadi**, 2008, 117-120.

[4] Cf. **Goldhill**, 1997, 56. Undoubtedly, like in Greater Armenia, in the Parthian court also were Hellenistic intellectuals. Cf. **Stepanyan**, 2015, 114.

theatrical norms suggests that the audience's inner (inverse) perspective was active and was expected to play a significant role in the forthcoming performance.[1]

The wedding party took place in the banquet hall (τῷ ἀνδρῶνι) of the Artaxata court. Plutarch's narrative gives reason to trace in it two phases. The first represented the traditional banquet (ἑστιάσεις τε καὶ πότοι) [Plut., Crass., 33, 1]. The kings and their close entourage (φίλοι καὶ σύντροφοι) took a separate seat. From time to time, they invited eminent guests to honor them with a drink or a gift. This was designed to re-establish and re-consolidate the elite hierarchy around the royal authority.[2]

When this phase of the event came to an end, servants removed the tables (τράπεζαι), and the second phase of the party, the main focus of this investigation, began. Like old Greek symposia, it contained a literary component as well.[3] The choice and the interpretation of the piece usually depended on the artistic and philosophical taste of the head of the banquet (συμποσίαρχος) [cf. Plato, Symp., 176a]. Despite the public nature of the performance, such banquets were considered a private function and were most popular in the Hellenistic age. For example, Alexander the Great's symposia as a rule included dramatic and literary performances to illustrate the essence of contemporary events [Borza, 1983, 47-48; Csapo E., 2010, 171-178].

In our case, the head of the banquet preferred to uncover the profound meaning of current events by means of tragedy.[4] Presumably, he adhered to a "tragic" understanding of history. As is well attested, "tragic history" appeared among members of the Peripatetic school in response to the Aristotelian concept of the strict opposition between history and tragedy (poetry) [Cf. Vernant, 1988, 245-247]. Aristotle claimed that "the true difference [between history and poetry] is that one relates what has happened, the other what may happen. Poetry, therefore, is more philosophical and higher than history: for poetry tends to express the universal (τὰ καθόλον), history the particular (τὰ καθ' ἕκαστον)" [Arist., Poet., 9,1451b, 4-5]. By contrast, the followers of tragic history believed in the possibility of history expressing universal meanings through concrete events and characters.[5] For this purpose, it demanded a specific mode of mimesis developed into a plot. In a larger sense, the authors of the plot of history were thought to be the immortal gods and Tyche. Therefore, the task of the historian was to uncover their will using appropriate facilities and skills. The Greek intellectual tradition recognized the peripatetic philosophers Douris and

[1] As we have singled out in the forthcoming research essay, this intellectual stance was characteristic of spectators in the Greek theater: "In the Greek theater the spectators had to do much of the work themselves, to imagine places and settings, important information and relationships from the mythical tradition, visualize in their minds the events occurring off-stage and narrated by others." See **Storey, Allan**, 2005, 52.

[2] The tradition of such banquets was vivid at the Achaemenid court. As for the Seleucid court, it combined Greek and Iranian traditions. Cf. **Brosius**, 2007, 44-46; **Murray**, 1996, 22-24; **Funck**, 1996, 44-45.

[3] Forms of eating and drinking convivial: "[…] reflect and reinforce the social system in a variety of complex ways; they also create and maintain a variety of social values." **Murray**, 1990, 5. Cf. **Wecowski**, 2014, 28-33.

[4] On this problem see in detail **Walbank**, 1985, 224-241; **Braund**, 468-474; **Zadorojniy A. V.**, 1997, 169-182; **Mossman**, 1998, 83-93.

[5] On the genre of tragic history see **Walbank**, 1985, 227-229; **Marincola**, 2013, 78-80.

Philarchus as the founders of this approach to history.[1] It became more popular in the Hellenistic age as the theatricality of everyday life became obvious in cities and (especially) royal courts.[2]

In the forthcoming research essay, we had to demonstrate that theatricality emerged as a prevailing ideology within the public decision-making process, and current events were interpreted according to the archetypes of old myths and tragedies [Cf. Chaniotis, 1997, 224-226]. Belief in historical catharsis paralleled concepts of revelation that spread largely in the Hellenistic age. Even Polybius, the greatest critic of tragic history could not remain indifferent to its principal ideas and viewed world history as the greatest performance (θέαμα) of Tyche [Polyb., I, 2, 7, 63, 9, XI, 24, 8, XXVIII, 9, 4, etc.].[3]

As for his criticism of tragic history, Polybius complained that it departed from the Platonic tradition and that tragedy represented a form of fiction (πλάσμα) deprived (partly or entirely) of truth. Its main purpose, he asserted, was to give pleasure, amaze, or terrify the audience through exaggeration (ὄγκος) of heroes' characters, emotions, and actions [de Lacy, 1952, 159-160]. This interpretation gained popularity in the late Hellenistic and (especially) Roman ages. Plutarch seems to have been one of the numerous writers who shared it. In his *Essays* and *Lives*, the negative meaning of the terms concerning theatre and theatrical modes of expressing events are obvious: Τραγωδία, μῦθος, σκηνογραφία, σχηματισμός, etc., are considered synonyms of falseness [de Lacy, 1952, 162-163].

Scholars consider the image of Tigranes II, the king of Greater Armenia, as one of the most appropriate examples of Plutarch's negative estimation of tragedy. According to the author: "Amid his great prosperity, the king's spirit had become tragic (i.e., pompous) and arrogant (φρόνεμα τραγικὸν καὶ ὑπέρογκον) [Plut., Luc., 21, 3]. The elaborate workings of Tigran's court are similarly defined as "pomp" which neither terrified nor astonished the Roman legate Appius Claudius (ταύτην μέντοι τραγῳδίαν οὐχ ὑποτρὲσας οὐδ'ἐκπλαγεὶς Ἄππιος) [Plut., Luc, 21, 6].[4] However, Plutarch is not consistent, and his assumptions regarding the abovementioned terms sometimes reveal elements of ambivalence. In this regard, scholars often point to the *Life of Demetrius* where these elements occupy an unusually prominent place [de Lacy, 1952, 168-169], but we shall argue below that a similar ambivalence can be found in the fragment of Plutarch under consideration as well.

Tragic Performance of History: According to Plutarch, the director of the Artaxata performance chose the *Bacchae* of Euripides as a model for his interpretation of the "event of the day."[5] Presumably, he departed from the Aristotelian theory of tragedy, some features of which are important for the present discussion. First of all, "[…] tragedy is an imitation of an action (μίμησις πραξέως) that is serious, complete, and of a certain magnitude" [Arist. Poet., 1449b, 20-25]. Second, "[…] an action implies personal

[1] Such an approach is thought to be the result of the intrinsic connection between theatre and history that can be traced in the role of the protagonist. See **Laskarēs**, 1923, 163-164.

[2] Theatrical garments and gestures were usual features of the Hellenistic kings**. Chaniotis A.**, 1997, 232-234.

[3] See **Shorey**, 1921, 280-283. Polybius assesses the enjoyableness as the main feature of this kind of narrative, a quality, which puts the rhetoric and tragic styles of the Hellenistic historiography in close relations. Cf. **Rebenich**, 2001, 266-269.

[4] **Stark F.**, 2012, 66. However, as we have shown above, it was a usual Hellenistic practice of staging the royal reception. Cf. **Chaniotis**, 1997, 235-38.

[5] On the Hellenistic theater in Greater Armenia see **Traina**, 2010, 95-102.

agents, who necessarily possess certain distinctive qualities both of character and thought" [ibid]. Third, "[…] thought (διάνοιαν) is required wherever a statement is proved, or a general truth (γνώμην) enunciated" [Arist., Poet., 1450a, 15]. Fourth, "[…] through pity and fear [tragedy] effects the proper purgation (κάταρσιν) of the emotions" [Arist., Poet., 1449b, 27; Cf. Carlson, 1993, 17-18].

Character and thought make up the two natural causes of action. In its turn, the action is designed to give birth to a plot (μῦθος) which consists of the arrangement of incidents in accordance with the appropriate magnitude and semantic duration [Wiles, 1987, 134-135]. This arrangement is considered by Aristotle as the first and most important part of the tragedy [Arist., Poet., 1450b 20]. As a complete whole, it has a beginning, a middle, and an end (ἀρχὴν καὶ μέσον καὶ τελευτήν). This movement initiates the change of fortune (τὸ μεταβάλλειν) - usually from good to bad. This change comes about "as the result not of vice but of some great error or frailty (δι'ἁμαρτιίαν μεγάλην)" [Arist., Poet., 1453a, 23]. The hero of a tragedy is involved in this error or is the author of it [de Romilly, 1970, 17].

We have touched on these theoretical approaches in the previous research essay. So, let's return to the *Bacchae*. I wish to first summarize the tragedy's plot to underscore how the director of its performance at Artaxata as described by Plutarch deviated from its narrative pattern [Burian, 1997,186-189]. The *Bacchae* was staged after its author's death at the City Dionysia festival in 405 BC.[1] It recounts the return of Dionysos from the East to Thebes to take revenge on the royal house's refusal to recognize and worship him. He also desires to vindicate his late mother, Semele, disgraced by the Thebans. God drives the Theban women into ecstatic madness and sends them to the top of Mount Cithaeron to commit orgies. They are turned into maenads and are led by Agave, the sister of Semele and mother of the young Theban king Pentheus. Dionysos meets with Pentheus disguised as "a stranger" and enchants him as well.

He convinces the young king to put on woman's clothing and go to Cithaeron to watch the orgies. Unfortunately for Pentheus, the maenads catch him and tear him to pieces; in their mad imagination, Pentheus looks like a young lion. The more active participant is Agave who holds the "lion's head" above her own and solemnly leads the maenads to Thebes. She is in ritual delight but the trance soon wears off. Guided by her father, she comes back to reality understanding that she has killed her beloved son. The mother's grief is limitless, and nobody can condole with her. The vengeance of Dionysos also involves his terrestrial grandparents, Cadmus, and his wife, as he turns them into serpents. In the final scene, Dionysos appears in all his glory; his triumph is complete as he has demonstrated his divine power and established his worship in Thebes.

Two persons make up the main opposition of the tragic plot: Dionysos and Pentheus (anti-Dionysos). The first embodies the polarities of vitality: life and death, joy and sorrow, wisdom and violence. As to the second, he is tyrannous, lawless, and selfish.[2]

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[1] Four Dionysian festivals were prominent in Athens: the Rural Dionysia, Lenaea, Anthesteria, and City Dionysia. See in detail **Kerényi**, 1996, 290-314; **Larson**, 2007, 117-42.

[2] Pentheus is "a king who is too royal, too tyrannical, a male who is too virile, a Greek who is too convinced in his superiority over barbarians, a man of the city who turns reason of state into a narrowly positivistic concept, **Vernant**, 1990, 403.

This opposition played an important role in the divination of Hellenistic kings starting from Alexander of Macedonian. They denied earthly goods to acquire sacred royalty through Dionysus's important attributes of epiphany and salvation.[1] In this regard, the moral of the tragedy may be summarized as underscoring that human truth is only an illusion. The last *stasimon* of the chorus confirms this pivotal idea:

> *And the end men looked for cometh not,*
> *And the path is there where no man thought […]*
> [Eur., Bacch., 1390-91].

This plot and its general idea (γνῶριμα) were most probably present in the reverse perspective of the participants of the Artaxata performance, and the director was prepared to model his vision of the day's event after it.[2] More exactly, he planned to demonstrate in what way the Parthian expedition of Crassus ended as a tragedy (ὥσπερ τραγῳδίαν τελευτῆσαι) [Plut., Crass., 33, 4]. Plutarch's narrative contains sufficient information to outline this new tragic plot.

Tragic actors and a chorus were invited for this purpose. Did they make up an itinerant artistic association (τεχνῖται Διονυσιακοὶ), or did they live permanently at the court of Artaxata? The question still has no answers.[3] In any event, the group played the roles prescribed to it by the director, and the leading position belonged to Jason of Tralles who played the roles of both Agave and Pentheus.[4] Most probably, the performance was not designed to reproduce the *Bacchae* in its entirety, but only some fragments appropriate to the day's event. By this approach, Jason first played the role of Pentheus presenting, evidently, his refusal to recognize Dionysus's divinity. The second fragment began with his song preparing the entrance of Agave. The participants likely had to restore the connection of the two fragments from memory.

The deviation from Euripides' plot began in the third fragment.[5] The messenger of General Surena came up to the door of the banqueting-hall: "[…] and after a low obeisance cast the head of Crassus into the center of the company" [Plut., Crass., 33, 2]. From this point on, a new tragic plot began in the conventional scene of the hall. With applause and shouts of joy, the audience accepted the main idea of the director about the identity of Pentheus and Crassus. In this light, the Roman general looked as tyrannous, lawless, and selfish as the antihero whose evil destiny was inevitable.

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[1] **Smith R.**, 1993, 207. In the image of Alexander and his successors, Plutarch underlines the bright sides of Dionysos - the world conqueror, the bringer of joy, cf. **Mossman**, 1998, 87.

[2] Taking into consideration the fact that the secret manipulator of the plot of the *Bacchae* was Dionysos, one may conclude that Artawazd II imitated this role. Cf. **Vernant**, 1990, in MTAG, 390.

[3] However, the second preposition seems more possible: the fragment by Plutarch tells about the association of itinerant actors who performed tragedies in cities and courts of the East. CF. **Mikalson J. D.**, 2006, 211; **Evans**, 121-22.

[4] In theatrical terms, Jason was performing a travesty. See **Laskarēs**, 1923. Theatrikon, 317, s.v. *Travesti*.

[5] Obvious or allusive deviations were characteristic of Hellenistic (particularly political) performances. However, this was an important feature of all Classical and Hellenistic cultures – literature, philosophy, rhetoric, drama, etc. In the previous research essay, we discussed this phenomenon in the background of the reverse perspective of Greek citizens consisting of textual networks.

Jason of Tralles continued in this vein, discarding the costume of Pentheus and "assuming the role of the frenzied Agave, sang these verses as if inspired:

'We bring from the mountain
A tendril fresh-cut to the palace,
A wonderful prey' [Eur*.,* Bacch., 1170-72].

[Plut., Crass., 33, 3]

Following Euripides's plot, the audience would come back to the image of the unhappy mother who had killed her son. In the case of Crassus, Rome would have been imagined in the role of Agave. According to this logic, the ideology of the tragic performance would have coincided with that of the ritual procession in which Rome represented the pole of evil. As was shown above, the procession probably reflected the official Parthian interpretation formulated in the ideological center of the king of kings.[1] However, such expectations did not come to pass. The deviation from the standard plot continued, and Agave came up to her renowned dialogue with the chorus:

Who slew him? (Chorus)

Mine is the honour. (Agave) [Plut., Crass., 33, 4].

Suddenly, one of the Parthian grandees, Pomaxathres:[2] "[…] sprang up and laid hold of the head, feeling that it was more appropriate for him to say this than for Jason" [Plut., Crass., 33,3]. On this occasion, the new interpretation of the plot became apparent; Mother-Rome had no part in the murder of Crassus. The author of this tragic incident was a Parthian grandee.[3] In Plutarch's words, the Parthian king was delighted and bestowed rich gifts upon both Pomaxathres and Jason. Supposedly, this interruption was a *surprise* for him. The director of the new plot had to legitimize the alteration through the previous course of actions of the antihero. He would have to make it per the canon of the tragic plays, looking particularly for the point when the *change of fortune* occurred.[4] Keeping in mind the fact that tragedy represented a complete action, he would have to come back to the beginning of the Parthian expedition of Crassus.[5]

Beginning as a model for a tragic end: The beginning of Crassus' expedition, according to Plutarch's narrative, was marked by dramatic events. In 55 BC, Crassus held the consulship with Pompey, and Syria fell to him for the forthcoming five years by lot. He accepted this with great exaltation and began thinking: "[…] he would not consider Syria nor even Parthia as the boundaries of his success, but thought to make the campaigns of Lucullus against Tigranes and those of Pompey against Mithridates

[1] On this center see **Neusner**, 1963, 42.

[2] Most probably the name derived from Νομαξάθρης (=Av. *Nāmōxšathra*) which denoted a power over a tribal or administrative unit. See **Justi F.**, 1895, 254.

[3] The director, obviously, departed from the idea that the form and context of the performance of a tragedy made the audience "[…] view the same characters and circumstances in a consciously constructed drama that pointed to a world beyond the theatre," **Rehm**, 1994, 46.

[4] Proceeding from the theory of Classical tragedy, this *change of fortune* could be formulated as *peripety*.

[5] Let's remember that this principle implied dialogical correspondence of the beginning and end of every poetic composure. Cf. **Smith**, 1968, 10-14.

seem mere child's play, and flew on the wings of his hopes as far as Bactria and India and the Outer Sea" [Plut., Crass., 16, 2].

Crassus boasted in this manner among the intimate circle of his friends but the rumor soon spread in Rome. Of these rumors, the political opponents initiated attacks against him. The plebeian tribunes[1] were the most active in opposing Crassus. Invested in a sacred power of veto in the borders of the City, they did their best to stop the expedition. They justified their denial by divine and human justice: "[…] and a large party arose which was displeased that anyone should go out to wage war on men who had done the state no wrong (οὐδὲν ἀδικοῦσιν), but were in treaty relations with it (ἀλλ'ἐνσπόνδοις)" [Plut., Crass., 16, 3].[2] They particularly pointed out the fact that "[…] in the decree which was passed regarding his mission there was no mention of a Parthian war" [Ibid.]. Caesar and Pompey, on the other hand, supported and encouraged Crassus.

On the day of the departure, the multitude was summoned by the plebeian tribunes to block Crassus's passage out of the city. The latter had foreseen such a possibility and had sought the support of Pompey who had great influence in Rome.[3] Pompey joined Crassus's procession and when the people saw his presence, "they were mollified and gave way before them in silence" [Ibid.].[4] One of the plebeian tribunes, Ateius, "on meeting Crassus, at first tried to stop him with words, and protested against his advance; then he bade his attendant seize the person of Crassus and detain him" [Plut., Crass. 16, 4]. The other tribunes did not support him, and Crassus trod to the gate of the City. But Ateius did not give up and "he ran on ahead to the city gate, he placed there blazing brazier, and when Crassus came up, cast incense and libations upon it, and invoked curses which were dreadful and terrifying in themselves and were reinforced by sundry and dreadful gods whom he summoned and called by the name" [Plut., Crass., 16, 5]. The populace found fault with Ateius for casting these curses for, although he tried to obstruct Crassus for the sake of the City (δι'πόλιν), the curses were believed to harm Rome as well.

Indeed, it was an impressive change of fortune: Mother-Rome tried unsuccessfully to stop the plans of Crassus, her insane son, but he had already set up a triumvirate with Caesar and Pompey

[1] The Collegium of plebeian tribunes was probably established in 494 BC. It contained ten members who were charged with the defense of the lives and property of Roman citizens (ius auxilii). The person of the tribunes was sacrosanct (*sacrosanta potestas*), and nobody could insult or harm them without severe punishment. If unanimous, they could exercise a veto (*ius intercessioni*) against the acts of magistrates, laws, elections, and *senatus consulta*. They could also hold *comitia tributata* and pass decrees. The authority of the tribunes was valid only in the borders of the City. See **Momigliano**, 1992, 1092; **North**, 2010, 264-266.

[2]On the vicissitudes of state relations between Rome and Parthia in the previous period, see in detail **Keaveney A.**, 1981, 195-212.

[3] On Pompey's influence on the political situation in Rome in 60-50-s BC. see **Chilver**, 1992, 858; **Seager**, 2002, 127-129.

[4] Pompey understood very well that the campaign was fraught with great dangers that could cause it to end in disaster. However, he supported Crassus since such an outcome would not contradict his own future plans; apparently, the same was true about Caesar's support.

intending to make "themselves sole masters of the state" [Plut., Crass., 14, 5]. In other words, the Mother herself was in great danger and was not responsible for the evil actions of her son.[1]

> *Plutarch gives evidence that the Parthians (probably, through their intelligence service) were informed about this. King Orodes II (Arsaces) in his brief message to Crassus emphasized: "[…] that if the army had been sent out by the Roman people, it meant war without truce and treaty; but if it was against the wishes of his country, as they were informed, and for his own private gain that Crassus had come up in arms against the Parthians and occupied their territory, then Arsaces would act with moderation, would take pity on the old age of Crassus, and release to the Romans the men whom he had under watch and ward rather than watching over him." [Plut., Crass., XVIII, 1].*

From this perspective, the beginning and the end of Crassus's life tragedy seemed to have equivalent narrative elements.[2] According to such an interpretation, Rome was no longer imagined as the pole of evil, and the Parthian expedition of Crassus appeared as an unfortunate accident engendered by personal avarice and vainglory. With the catastrophe and murder of the antihero, the restoration of peace and harmony could now be possible. This message to Rome was uttered at the Armenian court through the deviation from the plot of the *Bacchae* of Euripides.

Conclusion: The Parthian expedition of Crassus placed Artawazd II in a very complicated situation. His main problem was to secure the sovereignty of Greater Armenia by striking a balance between two super-states. After some hesitation, the king decided to continue the political line adopted by Tigran II in the last years of his reign. This policy implied the friendly relations (*amicitia*) of Greater Armenia with both Rome and Parthia and bestowed upon the country a duty to support neither of the conflicting sides against the other.[3] Thus, while the triumph over Crassus was celebrated by the Parthians with a pompous procession whereby they glorified their military and moral superiority over the coward and base Romans, the tragic performance held at the Armenian court contained a different message releasing Rome from responsibility for Crassus's expedition and its catastrophic outcome. Instead, Rome was imagined as a Mother mourning her insane son who had violated the common peace and friendly relations between the two polities. We now come to the last point of the present investigation concerning the authorship of the performance in Artaxata. Indeed, who directed the semantic development of the historical play and the skillful deviation from the plot of the *Bacchae*? The answer to this question can only be tentative and based on the common logic of the situation which, as demonstrated above, was that

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[1] Apparently, the director of the performance shared the *anti-tyrannical stance* of the old Roman aristocracy and connected his expectations with the old Republic.

[2] Based on Aristotelian theory, modern scholars have postulated the concept of *retrospective patterning* according to which: "[…] endings have, or appear to have an interpretative authority since the point of closure may be seen as the point at which the audience can finally look back at a completed action and read it fully." **Roberts**, 2005, 137.

[3] Above, we discussed the problem of *amicitia* in light of ancient international law. Now, we would like to add to that a new nuance while underlying that friendship occupied a very important position in the hierarchy of human moral values. By the principle of isomorphism of individuals and state forms, it was applied to interstate relations. See **Konstan**, 1997, 72-78.

the palace performance and the artistic representation of the exoneration of Rome sought the restoration of the policy of friendship of Greater Armenia with both super-states. The text of Plutarch may help point us in the right direction as it contains a rather transparent allusion to the authorship of the performance. Embellishing the portrait of Artawazd II, the author points out that the Armenian king "[…] actually composed tragedies, and wrote orations and histories" [Plut., Crass., 33, 2]. It is well-known that the king had been tutored under the supervision of the Greek intellectuals who had found refuge at the court of Tigran II.[1]

Moreover, Plutarch states that some of the works of Artawazd II were still preserved (ὧν εἴναι διασώζονται) [Plut., Crass., 33, 2]. Plutarch was writing in Greece more than a hundred years after the events under consideration, and it would not be an exaggeration to state that the works of the Armenian king continued to hold the interest of Greek intellectuals. Does Plutarch's statement indicate that he had used Artavazd's works? While an absolute answer again remains tentative, there is a high degree of probability that he did.[2] This conclusion finds additional proof in Plutarch's final considerations of the destiny of the persons involved in the black-and-white clash of super-states. According to him, "[…] worthy punishment overtook both Orodes for his cruelty and Surena for his treachery" [Plut., Crass., 33, 5]. This happened in accordance with global justice (δική) which governs both the universe and human lives,[3] but one detail raises a surprise: Artavazd II is not mentioned among these names, despite the steady tradition of Roman historiography accusing him of treachery. Presumably, Plutarch was satisfied by the political arguments of the king and agreed with them.

Plutarch's information about Artavazd II's literary activity, his observation that these works were still available a century later, and his omission of the Armenian king from the fitting punishment that was meted out to the Parthian king and general suggest that the Armenian court worked out its approach to the Parthian campaign of Crassus which it attempted to articulate through a tragic performance. This approach circumvented the opposing positions of mutual alienation and hatred, victory, and defeat by endorsing a compromise, the equivalent of the existential and moral mean (τὸ μέσον).[4] This analysis of Plutarch's fragment further suggests that Artavazd II may have composed a tragic history based on Artaxata's court performance that also served as Plutarch's source. A tentative synopsis of this lost history would have looked as follows: the three most influential politicians of Rome, Caesar, Pompey, and Crassus, established the triumvirate to subdue the Republic. Once in power, they divided the empire. Crassus obtains Syria by lot and fosters a plan to overpower Parthia, Bactria, and India to reach the Outer Sea.

[1] Among them, as it was stated above, the philosopher Metrodorus of Scepsis and the orator Amphicrates of Athens were the most renowned [Plut., Luc., 22, 2].

[2] George Goyan has reached a similar conclusion, although without sufficient philological and historical argumentation. See **Гоян**, 1952, 129-135.

[3] **Hall R. W.**, 2004, 72-76. The idea of isomorphism between the earthly and cosmic cities was developed by the Stoics, see **Schofield M.**, 1999, 760-769. In social communities, global justice was paralleled with respect (αἰδώς). Together they generated the law (νόμος)– the main regulator of social relations. Euripides shared these ideas of the Sophists, see **Adkins A. W. H.**, 1972, 104-105.

[4] According to Aristotle, the mean marked the desirable middle of two extremes which corresponded to virtue excellence, and beauty, Arist., *Nic. Eth.*, II, 1106b, 19-29.

Through the plebeian tribunes Rome tries to stop this insane plan but in vain, and the Parthian campaign of Crassus ends in a catastrophe at Carrhae. The Parthians celebrate their victory with great pomp, while the kingdom of Greater Armenia adopts a middle position, which implies friendly relations with the opposing sides. The Armenian king, Artavazd II, adhering to the concept of friendship that demands neutrality between the two opponents, comes to terms with the Parthian king and hopes to find an adequate response from the Romans.

Abbreviations

AHK - 1996 - P. Bidle, et al. (eds), Aspects of Hellenistic Kingship, Aarhus, UP.

CCGT - 1997 - P. E. Easterling (ed.), The Cambridge Companion to Greek Tragedy, Cambridge, UP.

CCHW - 2006 - G. R. Bugh (ed.), The Cambridge Companion to the Hellenistic World, Cambridge, UP.

CHHP - 1999 - K. Algra, J. Barnes, J. Mansfeld, M. Schofield (eds), The Cambridge History of Hellenistic Philosophy, Cambridge, UP.

CCRR - 2004 - H. I. Flower (ed.), The Cambridge Companion to the Roman Republic, Cambridge, UP.

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CGT - 2005 - J. Gregory (ed.), A Companion to Greek Tragedy, Malden (Ma), Oxford, Blackwell.

CHI - 1983 - E. Yarshater (ed.), The Cambridge History of Iran, v. 2, Cambridge, UP.

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MTAD - 1990 - J.-P. Vernant and P. P. Vidal-Naquet, Myth and Tragedy in Ancient Greece, New York, Zone Books.

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