

RETHINKING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HELLENISTIC BAKTRIA AND THE SELEUKID EMPIRE

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Hellenistic scholars have long held that Baktria-Sogdiana, comprising roughly modern Afghanistan and southern Turkmenistan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, had broken away from the Seleukid Empire and established a fully independent kingdom by the middle of the third century BC. According to the consensus view, after the death of Alexander the Great, control of Baktria changed hands several times before coming under the rule of the Seleukids at the end of the fourth century BC, only to be lost to their local satraps, Diodotos I and II, at some point near the middle of the third century BC, from which time Baktria-Sogdiana became a fully independent, politically sovereign kingdom. However, new evidence relating to ancient Baktria, as well as some rather significant reinterpretations of existing evidence, must now force us to reconsider what this independence actually entailed and to re-examine the relationship of an independent hellenistic Baktria to the wider Seleukid Empire. The reappraisal undertaken below will demonstrate that Baktria, though nominally independent by about 250 BC, nonetheless remained a loyal Seleukid vassal state down to the early to mid second century BC, with one brief period of rebellion between ca. 239/8 BC and 229/8 BC. More importantly, this revised view of the relationship of hellenistic Baktria to the wider Seleukid Empire in the third and second centuries BC can also shed some much-needed light on how the Seleukid monarchs managed the eastern frontiers of their empire.

I. The common view of Baktrian independence: a critique

The scant evidence for affairs in Baktria after the death of Alexander III has led to considerable disagreement and confusion over when and how Baktria emerged as an independent Greco-Macedonian kingdom in the third century BC.¹ The literary references are extremely few, lacking detail, and seemingly contradictory at times. Much of what has been discovered thus far about hellenistic Baktria therefore rests mainly on numismatic evidence,² although discoveries in the areas of epigraphy and archaeology³

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promise to shed more light on this important hellenistic kingdom in Central Asia. The most common approach to reconstructing events in hellenistic Baktria has been to try to coordinate the numismatic evidence with the scant literary evidence in order to establish a rough chronology and basic outline of a political history for the region. Unfortunately agreement, let alone certainty, has eluded most attempts owing mainly to confusion over a critical passage in Justin that is typically used as an anchor for establishing the beginning of Baktrian independence, confusion compounded by a rather problematic interpretation of the political significance of some of the earliest Diodotid coinage.

As Baktrian coins have no dating system, historians have been forced to rely upon the above-mentioned passage in Justin when trying to date the beginnings of Baktrian independence from the Seleukids. Unfortunately, Justin is notoriously sloppy when it comes to chronology as his rather convoluted reference to Baktria demonstrates. In his narrative on the growth of Parthian independence under Arsakes I Justin touches on the revolt of Baktria:

After the death of Alexander the Great, when his rule of the East was divided among his successors, the rule of the Parthians was handed to Stassanor, a foreign ally, since no one of the Makedonians considered it worthy. Afterward, when the Makedonians were led into civil war, they followed Eumenes together with the rest of the peoples of Upper Asia, [and] when he was conquered, they crossed over to Antigonos. After him they were possessed by Seleukos Nikator and Antiochos and [their] successors, from whose great-grandson Seleukos they first revolted in the First Punic War in the consulship of L. Manlius Vulso and M. Atilius Regulus. Discord of the two brothers Seleukos and Antiochos gave them impunity for this revolt, [and] while they wished to snatch the kingdom intact from one another, they neglected to pursue the rebels. At the same time Theodotus [i.e. Diodotos I], satrap of the thousand cities of the Baktrians, revolted and ordered that he be called king, which example the people of the entire East followed and revolted from the Makedonians. There was at this time one Arsakes, a man of uncertain origin, but of proven courage. This man, being accustomed to live by brigandage and rapine, when the news had been received that Seleukos had been defeated by the Gauls in Asia, being freed from fear of the king, having attacked the Parthians with a force of bandits, crushed their satrap Andragoras, and once he had been destroyed, undertook the rule of the nation [i.e. of the Parthians]. Then, not much later, for a time he also occupied the kingdom of the Hyrkanians, and so thus endowed with the rule of two states, he prepared a grand army out of fear of Seleukos [i.e. Seleukos II] and Theodotus [i.e. Diodotos I] king of the Baktrians. But, having been freed by the sudden death of Theodotus, he made an alliance and a peace with his son, who was also Theodotus [i.e. Diodotos II], and not much later, when

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he had gone out to meet with Seleukos who had come in order to pursue the rebels, he was the victor. This day henceforth the Parthians observe as solemn, as though it were the beginning of their liberty.⁴

In the passage above Justin gives us several possible dates for the Parthian revolt under Arsakes which he notes occurred ‘at the same time’ (*eodem tempore*) as the Baktrian revolt. The first date Justin gives is the consulship of Lucius Manlius Vulso and Marcus Atilius Regulus. The *Consular Fasti* lists a pairing of *Caius* Atilius Regulus and Lucius Manlius Vulso for the year 250 BC.⁵ Justin’s substitution of ‘Marcus’ for ‘Caius’ is a small enough error and need not concern us.⁶ More serious is Justin’s addition that the conflict between Seleukos and Antiochos, presumably the war between Seleukos II Kallinikos and Antiochos Hierax, the so called *War of the Brothers*, traditionally dated to 241–225 BC, procured impunity for the rebels. This places the Parthian revolt well outside of the consulship of Regulus and Vulso. Appian locates the Parthian revolt in the immediate aftermath of the death of Antiochos II in 247/6 BC, as do Eusebios and Jerome.⁷ Justin’s convoluted chronology has, therefore, led modern scholars to prefer either the higher consular dating for the Baktrian revolt of around 256–250 BC⁸ or the lower dating tied to the death of Antiochos II in 246 BC.⁹ The only other mention of the Diodotid revolt is in Strabo’s *Geography* and this is of little assistance as Strabo provides no chronological point of reference.¹⁰ The chronological confusion in Justin is moreover compounded by the rather curious nature of the evidence from Diodotid coinage.

Only two names appear on all Diodotid coins, with some bearing the legend BASILEWS ANTIOXOU (of king Antiochos),¹¹ while others are inscribed with BASILEWS DIODOTOU (of king Diodotos).¹²



Fig. 1. Diodotid silver tetradrachm in the name of King Antiochos.

Coin India: <http://www.coinindia.com/MIG064f-Diodotos-136.16.jpg>

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Fig. 2. Diodotid silver tetradrachm in the name of King Diodotos.

Coin India: <http://www.coinindia.com/MIG074c-Diodotos-626.28.jpg>

Both sets of coins bear the same reverse type of Thundering Zeus which is not found among the Seleukid repertoire of reverse types ascribed by numismatists to Baktrian mints,¹³ but is the only reverse type found on all Diodotid silver coinage.¹⁴ As Antiochos II is the last Seleukid monarch who is known to have minted coins in Baktria¹⁵ and since no Seleukid monarch had visited Baktria between the death of Antiochos II and the anabasis of Antiochos III, the logical tendency among most historians and numismatists has been to place the coins bearing the legend BASILEWS ANTIOXOU first in the series of Diodotid coinage in the belief that these were minted by Diodotos I on behalf of Antiochos II while the former was still merely satrap in Baktria, and then to try to assemble the rest of the coins into a relative chronological order through die linking and portrait analysis.¹⁶

The most widely cited study of Diodotid coinage to date is that offered by Frank L. Holt in his landmark 1999 publication *Thundering Zeus: The Making of Hellenistic Baktria*.¹⁷ In this work Holt conducts a rather exhaustive study of Diodotid silver coinage. Holt divided the Diodotid silver coinage into six series (series A–F) based on legends, portraiture, reverse designs, control marks, and die linkages, and used these taxonomic criteria to assign each series to one of two possible Baktrian mints (mint A and B).¹⁸ Holt then separates this silver coinage into two broad categories based on the name inscribed in the legend. As seen in the table below, the ‘Antiochos’ coins are represented by Holt’s series A, C, and E, while the ‘Diodotos’ coins are found in series B, D, and F.

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Table 1

<i>Mint A</i>		<i>Mint B</i>	
<i>Old Portrait</i>	<i>Young Portrait</i>	<i>Old Portrait</i>	<i>Young Portrait</i>
A1 (Antiochos)			
A2			
A3			
A4			
A5			
A6	C1a (Antiochos)		
	C1		E1 (Antiochos)
			E2
			E3
			E4
A7	C2		E5
			E6 (Antiochos)
A8 (Antiochos)	C3 (Antiochos)		E7
			E8
			E9
	D1 (Diodotos)		F1 (Diodotos)
	D2		F2
	D3		F3
	D4		F4
	D5		F5
	D6		
	D7	B1 (Diodotos)	F6
	D8	B2	F7
		B3	F8

Adapted from F. Holt 1999: 92

Because the ‘Antiochos’ coins bear the Diodotid reverse type and a portrait that is not that of Antiochos II, Holt quite reasonably follows the general consensus in placing the ‘Antiochos’ coins earlier in time than the ‘Diodotos’ coins, thus confirming the view that the ‘Antiochos’ coins were minted by Diodotos I in the name of Antiochos II while he was still just a satrap of Bactria.¹⁹ The evidence to clinch the argument comes from very strong die linkages. According to Holt, the same obverse die was used to strike series F, 1–3 ascribed to Diodotos and E, 9 in the name of

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Antiochos.²⁰ Holt thus finds confirmation for the established consensus and sees these ‘Antiochos’ coins as representing the first tentative steps of Diodotos I toward a gradual secession from Seleukid rule.²¹ Eventually, his son Diodotos II would feel strong enough to make the final changes presaged by the ‘Antiochos’ satrapal coinage and replace the name of Antiochos with his own. The conclusion thus reached by Holt and others is that at some point between 256 and ca. 239 BC, the year in which Diodotos is thought to have died, Diodotos I gradually moved towards open revolt from the Seleukid Empire, indicating his intentions by minting a series of coins in the name of Antiochos II but using his own diademed image and reverse type. Then, after the death of Diodotos I, his son and successor, Diodotos II openly proclaimed his kingship in Baktria, dropping the name of the Seleukid monarch from Baktrian coins altogether and replacing it with his own name accompanied by the title ‘Basileus’. From this point forward, Baktria is believed to have severed its ties to the Seleukid Empire and to have become a fully independent kingdom in its own right.

But there are a number of problems with this reconstruction. First there is Justin’s text which clearly states that it was under the first Diodotos that Baktrian independence was proclaimed.²² Holt, echoing Tarn, simply notes that Justin or his source must have been in error about which Diodotos first ruled as a fully independent king in Baktria.²³ In support of this contention Holt notes that he was unable to establish any die links between the ‘Antiochos’ coins and those he ascribes to Diodotos I, which he concludes were minted posthumously by Diodotos II in his father’s honour, thus indicating that Diodotos I, contrary to Justin, never actually took the title of king himself.²⁴ But there is compelling evidence to prefer Justin on this point. In a recent re-examination of Holt’s die links Jens Jakobsson has pointed out that the die links between Holt’s series E (in the name of Antiochos) and F (in the name of Diodotos I), in the absence of obvious wear patterns, tell us that these series are chronologically adjacent to one another, but say nothing about which series is to be placed first and which one second.²⁵ Moreover, as Jakobsson notes, these ‘Antiochos’ coins ‘do not resemble other semi-autonomous coinages’ such as those of Philetairos, those issued by Ariaramnes of Cappadocia, or those issued by Magas of Kyrene.²⁶ More importantly, Jakobsson has identified several obverse types and control marks shared by the latest issues in the name of Antiochos and the earliest issues of Euthydemos I, the king who is known to have succeeded the Diodotids as ruler in Baktria.²⁷ As can be observed in the table below Jakobsson thus rearranges the order of the Diodotid coinage, placing the Antiochos coins last in the series rather than first and ascribes them to a third, hitherto unknown, Diodotid king Antiochos.

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Table 2

<i>Mint B</i>	Holt Series B (Diodotos I) – Old	Holt Series F (Diodotos II) – Young	Holt Series E (Antiochos) – Young		
<i>Connections</i>		Obverse die links			
<i>Mint A</i>		Holt Series D (Diodotos II) – Young	Holt Series C (Antiochos) – Young	Holt Series A (Antiochos) – Old	Euthydemos I Early Series
<i>Connections</i>		Obverse die links		3 common monograms and very similar portraits	

Adapted from J. Jakobsson 2011, 27

In further support of Jakobsson's claim of the existence of a third Diodotid king we might turn to Polybios' account of the anabasis of Antiochos III and his prolonged and largely fruitless siege of Euthydemos I in Baktra (ca. 212–10 BC), the satrapal capital of hellenistic Baktria. Polybios notes that during negotiations to raise the siege, Antiochos III reproached Euthydemos for being a rebel, to which Polybios adds,

For Euthydemos was himself from Magnesia, and he defended himself asking him how it was just that Antiochos should be eager to cast him out from his kingdom. For he himself had not become a rebel to the king, but when others revolted, having risen against the descendants of those men, he thus held the rule of the Baktrians...²⁸

Now if this passage from Polybios is read in conjunction with the above passage from Justin, a clear and interesting picture begins to emerge. In our passage from Justin we can observe that when Arsakes I began his predatory raids into Parthia, he feared the combined forces of Seleukos II and Diodotos I who, according to Justin, is *already* king of Baktria at this time, a fact that finds support in the numismatic evidence if we accept Jakobsson's rearrangement of the Diodotid coinage. This must force us to conclude that Diodotos I and the Seleukid king were on good terms *after* the former had already been proclaimed king. Holt himself acknowledges that Diodotos I and Seleukos II do seem to enjoy friendly relations and this is why he feels that the first Diodotos never actually took the title *Basileus*.²⁹ Yet Justin is explicit. Diodotos I is already king when Arsakes attempts his first incursion into Parthia.

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Polybios' remarks therefore support Justin's contention. Polybios has Euthydemos rebel against the kin (ἐγγόνους) of rebels. Now it is universally accepted that Euthydemos would have rebelled against Diodotos II. But Diodotos II could not be considered the kinsman of a rebel if his father Diodotos I was not considered one. This presupposes the existence of a third Diodotid king whom Jakobsson has identified as the 'Antiochos' on the Diodotid coin types, a theory that gains added support by the numismatic connections between the later coins of Antiochos and the earlier issues of Euthydemos I which can only mean that the latter succeeded the former and not Diodotos II. Moreover, this reconstruction makes better sense of the behaviour of the Seleukids toward Diodotid Baktria. If Diodotos I had minted coins in the name of the Seleukid Antiochos II which bore his own diademed image and reverse type as commonly supposed, it is difficult to see how this would not have posed an immediate challenge to Seleukid authority in Baktria. Yet no repercussions ensue from Antiochos II. Even after the death of Antiochos II, Diodotos I and Seleukos II still appear to be on good terms as we have just noted. The Seleukids thus could not have viewed Diodotos I as a rebellious satrap.

But the most significant confirmation that the Diodotid 'Antiochos' coins were not minted by Diodotos I on behalf of the Seleukid king comes from the commemorative medals of a later Baktrian king Agathokles (ca. 190–180 BC). Agathokles minted coins commemorating the rulers of Baktria stretching all the way back to Alexander the Great. Among these coins is a Diodotid type of Thundering Zeus bearing the legend BASILEWS ANTIOXOU NIKATOROS (of king Antiochos Nikator).³⁰



Fig. 3. Commemorative silver tetradrachm of Agathokles in the name of Antiochos Nikator: Coin India <http://www.coinindia.com/2616-Agathokles-ino-Antiochos-107.12.jpg>

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The reverse type of thundering Zeus clearly identifies these coins as a commemoration of Diodotid rule, but the Antiochos named on the coin is commonly said to be Antiochos II.³¹ However, Antiochos II bore the epithet Theos, not Nikator and the reverse type is Diodotid and not Seleukid. Finally, there is no reason why Agathokles would have commemorated *satrapal* coinage which the 'Antiochos' coins would surely have been if they were issued by Diodotos while he was still only satrap of Baktria. The only logical conclusion is that the Antiochos commemorated on the coins of Agathokles is the unnamed king alluded to by Polybios, the same Antiochos who appears on the 'Antiochos' coins of the Diodotids and whom Jakobsson has placed after the reign of Diodotos II and before that of Euthydemos I.

The implications of Jakobsson's finds are therefore quite significant. The Antiochos coins were not minted by Diodotos I as a sort of halfway declaration of independence, a declaration that would not be openly proclaimed until the reign of his son and successor Diodotos II as is widely believed. The coins which Holt ascribes to Diodotos I (series B) must therefore be placed first among Diodotid coin issues. Significantly, these already bear the title *Basileus*, leading us to conclude that Diodotos I proclaimed himself king at a single stroke as Justin's account suggests and did not gradually drift toward rebellion while remarkably managing to avoid attracting the attention of the Seleukid kings. More importantly, the discovery of a third Diodotid king in Antiochos Nikator and the chronological rearrangement of the Diodotid coinage that this discovery necessitates must force us to reconsider the circumstances of Baktrian independence from direct Seleukid control and to explore precisely what the assumption of the diadem meant in light of the apparently amiable relations with the Seleukids after its assumption by Diodotos.

II. The 'independence' of Diodotid Baktria

The rearranged numismatic evidence allows us to make better sense of the seemingly contradictory stories told by Baktrian coins and of the scant literary evidence as well. Firstly, as noted above, this new perspective suggests that there was no gradual drift toward independence. Rather, Diodotos I became king of Baktria at a single stroke as per Justin and, as we shall demonstrate, must have done so with the full support and blessing of the Seleukid king. At least two of the three Diodotid kings of Baktria, Diodotos I and Antiochos Nikator, must in fact be regarded as loyal Seleukid vassals in Baktria. Second, the addition of a third Baktrian king in Antiochos Nikator allows us to make better sense of the story of Baktrian independence as it is narrated in our literary sources and allows us to alter

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the chronology of events in Baktria so as to align them more closely with specific conditions prevailing in the wider Seleukid Empire.

First we must establish a timeline for the rise of the Diodotid monarchy in Baktria in light of this new evidence. For this we must return to Justin as he is the only source to provide us with specific dates. As we have seen, Justin gives us several dates and although this is somewhat confusing, it is possible to establish a workable chronology. To begin, it is important to note that Justin's narrative is about events in Parthia, not about Baktria *per se*. Justin simply uses the independence of Baktria in order to provide a chronological point of reference for events in Parthia which he describes as occurring *eodem tempore*. *Eodem tempore* ought never to be taken literally in Justin. Consider Justin's account of L. Mummius' destruction of Corinth at 34.2–3, an event generally thought to have occurred in 146 BC: but while referring to Mummius' destruction of Corinth, Justin notes 'while these things were happening' (*dum haec aguntur*) Antiochos (IV Epiphanes) attempted to invade Egypt but was turned back by the Roman ambassador Gaius Popillius Laenas, an event known to have occurred eighteen years earlier in 168 BC. Telescoping the chronology of events is thus one of the more infuriating idiosyncrasies of Justin and this is precisely what we have in his passage on events in Parthia. Significantly, however, a close reading will reveal that it was the independence of Baktria which, according to Justin, led the other peoples of the upper satrapies to revolt.³² Whether there was a causal relationship between the Diodotid claim to independence and the revolt *totius Orientis* is impossible to say. But what is clear is that the independence of Baktria occurred *before* the revolt of Arsakes I in Parthia. While it is true that there is some controversy over the precise chronology involved in the revolt of Arsakes I,³³ there can be no doubt that it occurred after the death of Antiochos II as per Appian *Syrian Wars* 65 and as confirmed by Eusebios and Jerome.³⁴ Arsakes I must therefore have revolted by 246 BC at the earliest.

This accords well enough with Justin's claim that the Parthian revolt occurred in the reign of Seleukos II and that the War of Brothers, traditionally dated to 241–225 BC, but which Coşkun revises to 246–241 BC so as to make it contemporaneous with the Laodikean War,³⁵ prevented Seleukos from immediately suppressing the revolt. Of the various chronological points of reference that Justin has given us, then, the only one that does not fit within the *terminus post quem* for the Parthian revolt is the consular date for Vulso and Regulus. As Justin has noted that Diodotos I achieved royal status in Baktria *before* the other peoples of the upper satrapies revolted, then the consular date must refer to Baktrian independence which Justin confusingly says had occurred *eodem tempore* as

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the revolt of Arsakes. Diodotos I thus commenced his reign as king of Baktria in 250 BC in the consulships of Vulso and Regulus.

Moreover, that he did so with the approval of the Seleukid dynasty is also clear. First, if Diodotos I had made himself king in 250 BC contrary to Seleukid wishes, then one must wonder why no attempt was made to recover the upper satrapies until ca. 228/7 BC when Seleukos II moved to quell the revolts there. Even then, Seleukos' objective was Parthia not Baktria. In fact, no move was made to 'recover' Baktria until the anabasis of Antiochos III (ca. 212–205 BC) which is odd given the important position occupied by Baktria in the Seleukid Empire.³⁶ On the contrary, Arsakes I, after he had overrun Parthia and Hyrkania, feared the armies of Seleukos II and Diodotos I. As mentioned above, this would indicate that Diodotos and Seleukos were on good terms even though Diodotos had already adopted the title of *Basileus* as both Justin and the (revised) numismatic evidence clearly suggest.

The precise circumstances surrounding Diodotos' claim to royal status in Baktria are difficult to discern; however, there is enough evidence to allow for some reasonable if cautious speculation. Justin in his *Prologus* notes that Diodotos I repelled an invasion of Scythian nomads who managed to seize the satrapal capital of Baktra, thus earning him the epithet *Sōtēr*, a name which also appears on the coins of Agathokles commemorating the reign of Diodotos I.³⁷ In addition, the earliest coins of Diodotos I contain a wreath which is generally not taken as a mint mark owing to the fact that it also appears on Agathokles' commemorative medals of Diodotos I (see Figure 3 above),³⁸ thus leading Holt to conclude that such wreaths are 'patent numismatic signs of some great military victory,' which, he conjectures, must have involved a victory over Arsakes I in the 240s or 230s BC.³⁹ However, Strabo notes that some writers ascribe a Baktrian origin to Arsakes and adds that Arsakes fled Baktria owing to the growing power of Diodotos before fleeing to Parthia and causing it to revolt.⁴⁰ It seems a reasonable conjecture that Strabo's account of Arsakes' flight from Baktria and Justin's reference to Diodotos' reconquest of Baktra in his *Prologue* might even be taken to refer to the same event. Arsakes might have attempted to seize Baktra with the aid of Scythian allies. Foiled in his attempt by Diodotos I, he fled and undertook his revolt in Parthia which we know occurred a few years later in about 246 BC. Diodotos then, as Justin notes, liberated the satrapal capital and drove the insurgents out of Baktria, thus forcing Arsakes to flee to Parthia as per Strabo where he would stir up further rebellion several years later. If Arsakes' insurgency in Baktria occurred in or shortly before 250 BC, Diodotos might well have used such an occasion to demand a royal title.

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Moreover, Antiochos II might well have been willing to acquiesce in this demand as he clearly needed a man with full royal authority to maintain Seleukid interests in the teeth of internal rebellions supported by incursions of nomadic Scythians along his eastern marches. Seleukos I had the benefit of a Baktrian wife in Apama, daughter of the Baktrian noble Spitamenes, who must have possessed personal ties with local potentates and this must have gone some way towards ensuring the loyalty of Baktria to the Seleukid house during his reign. Such local connections were certainly critical to governing Baktria successfully it seems, as Alexander's decision to marry Roxane would indicate.⁴¹ Seleukos I exercised control over his eastern frontiers by employing a joint kingship from 292–281 BC with Antiochos I, his son from the Baktrian Apama, when Antiochos I was given direct royal authority over the eastern satrapies. Antiochos II, however, was not afforded such a luxury and was, moreover, distracted by a serious crisis in the West of his empire in the Second Syrian War (260–253 BC), the final years of which must surely have aligned closely with Arsakes' rebellious activities in Baktria and with Diodotos' assumption of the diadem. If Diodotos I used the insurgency of Arsakes in Baktria and the subsequent Scythian incursions to demand a diadem, we can even see why Justin/Trogus might have chosen the word '*defecit*' (rebel) to describe Diodotos' action. In any case, whether Diodotos extorted the royal title from Antiochos II or whether the latter freely offered it, the behaviour of both kings subsequent to Diodotos' assumption of the diadem clearly indicated that Diodotos I remained a loyal Seleukid vassal, as he continued to support the Seleukids against the rebel Arsakes.

However, relations between the Seleukids and the Diodotids would not remain friendly for long. According to Justin, Diodotos I died shortly after the defeat of Seleukos II at the hands of the Gauls, presumably a reference to the Battle of Ankyra, an event traditionally dated to around 240/239 BC.⁴² Diodotos I was succeeded by his son Diodotos II according to Justin and the behaviour of Diodotos II upon his accession sheds further light on the precise nature of Seleukid-Diodotid relations. Justin notes that after the death of his father, Diodotos II immediately made peace and an alliance (*foedus ac pacem fecit*) with Arsakes I. Seleukos II would now have to face the combined forces of a much expanded Parthian power under Arsakes I, as well as those of Baktria, the erstwhile Seleukid ally. But this begs the question of how exactly Diodotos II would have benefited from this reversal of his father's policy toward Parthia and so towards the Seleukid house as well. Why the about face? A possible answer to this might lie in the reconfigured numismatic evidence proposed by Jakobsson.

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As we have seen, Jakobsson has concluded that the Diodotid coins bearing the 'Antiochos' legend were minted not by Diodotos I as satrapal coinage, but by a third Diodotid king Antiochos Nikator and has linked these 'Antiochos' coins with the earliest issues of Euthydemos I, thus indicating that this Antiochos reigned after Diodotos II. If we posit the possibility that Diodotos II was not the legitimate heir to the Baktrian throne, then the policy of the second Diodotos is understandable. Jakobsson tantalizingly suggests that 'it is also possible that Diodotos I was trusted with the satrapy of Bactria because he was related to the Seleukids.'⁴³ The Seleukid use of marriage ties in order to extend political hegemony into various quarters of the empire is well documented.⁴⁴ It is thus a possibility that when Diodotos I was granted the right to style himself *Basileus* and mint his own coins by Antiochos II in 250 BC, his loyalty to the Seleukid house was ensured with a marriage to a woman of the Seleukid royal family. The notion of a marriage connection between the Seleukids and Diodotids was first suggested by W. W. Tarn in 1936,⁴⁵ but has since been widely rejected.⁴⁶ Tarn argued that it was Diodotos II who married an unnamed Seleukid princess and added that a daughter from this marriage was in turn married off to Euthydemos I. As mentioned, Tarn's position has been rightly rejected and there is certainly no positive evidence attesting to either marriage. Yet there is enough circumstantial evidence surrounding events in Bactria to make a marriage tie between the Seleukids and the Diodotids seem likely.

If Diodotos I married a Seleukid woman in about 250 BC as a condition of his assumption of the diadem, then it is reasonable to assume that any resulting male progeny would be expected to assume the diadem in their turn. It is also reasonable to surmise that Diodotos I might have given a male child resulting from such a marriage the name Antiochos in order to advertise his connection to the Seleukid house. As Jakobsson notes, 'there is a parallel in the minor kingdom of Commagene in Asia Minor, which was related to the Seleukids on the distaff side, and in which four kings were named Antiochos.'⁴⁷ If this son from his Seleukid bride is our Antiochos Nikator, who would have been perhaps ten or eleven years old in 240/39 BC when Diodotos I is thought to have died, and he was named heir to the Baktrian throne in place of his older half-brother Diodotos II, then we can understand why the latter would have reversed his father's policy regarding Parthia. It is perhaps even possible that the tension between Arsakes and Diodotos I recorded by Strabo resulted from Arsakes' support of Diodotos II against his father's intentions to pass the diadem to his younger son Antiochos. Not content either to act as regent or to be bypassed altogether, he staged a coup immediately upon the death of his father and for this

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coup he would have needed allies which he found conveniently in Arsakes I who had slipped away to Parthia in order to raise a revolt there.

Our reconstruction has the added advantage of aligning the chronologies of a number of critical events in the Seleukid Empire with those in Baktria. Diodotos II can reasonably be said to have reigned for about ten years based on the number of his coin issues,⁴⁸ which means that he would have ruled Baktria from 240/39 to 230/29 BC based on our revised chronology for the assumption of the diadem by his father. Significantly, Holt notes that the Baktrian city of Ai Khanoum appears to have endured an attack around 225 BC, an event which he suggests might have been linked to the ‘emergence of Euthydemos’.⁴⁹ However, such an interpretation is ruled out of court by Jakobsson’s reconstruction. Jakobsson adopts the highest possible dating for the reign of Diodotos I and gives him a rather short reign as well (255–50 BC). This causes him to adopt a high dating for subsequent reigns so that he has Diodotos II reigning from 250–240 BC and Antiochos Nikator reigning from 240–225 BC.⁵⁰ In this way Jakobsson is able to coordinate the partial destruction of Ai Khanoum with the accession of Euthydemos I as per Holt. But if we assume that Justin erred in the consular date he provides, giving us a ‘Marcus Regulus’ instead of a ‘Caius Regulus’ as found in the *Consular Fasti*, then Diodotos I would have commenced his reign in 250 BC and died around 240/39 BC. If, then, Diodotos II, whose reign lasted approximately ten years, ruled until about 229 BC, or slightly later,⁵¹ we are close enough chronologically to the partial destruction of Ai Khanoum (ca. 225 BC) to tentatively link it to the overthrow of Diodotos II by the half-Seleukid Antiochos Nikator who would have been in his early twenties at this time. From this we would be forced to conclude that Diodotos II was a rebel against the Seleukids as the words of Polybios, noted above, indirectly imply and that his rule was brought to an end by his younger brother Antiochos. Indeed, a brief look at Jakobsson’s reconstruction of the Diodotid coinage (see Table 2 above) reveals that all the coins ascribed to Diodotos II contain a portrait of a young man, while the ‘Antiochos’ coins have portraits that age over time, which might be taken to mean that Diodotos II did not rule a long time as we might expect if he had been violently overthrown. If Euthydemos had overthrown Antiochos Nikator rather than Diodotos II, then he could indeed have claimed to have overthrown the kinsman of a rebel, however disingenuous a defence this might have been considering that Antiochos Nikator would have been seen as a legitimate Seleukid vassal king in his own right.

Our reconstruction of the events in Baktria from the accession of Diodotos I to the accession of Euthydemos I makes sense of both the

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literary and numismatic evidence. But more importantly this reconstruction allows us to connect events in Baktria with those of the wider Seleukid Empire through the necessary alterations in the chronology of the Diodotid kings. As mentioned above, Diodotos I would have reigned from 250 BC until about 240/239 BC and Diodotos II from 240/239 BC until ca. 230/229 BC. Finally, Jakobsson assigns a reign of approximately fifteen years to Antiochos Nikator, which, on our modified chronology, gives him a reign running from 229/8 BC to about 214/13 BC. These dates align significantly with known Seleukid activities in the upper satrapies and perhaps even help to explain them.

First, if Diodotos I were a legitimate vassal king of Antiochos II, then the inaction of the latter when Diodotos assumed the diadem and started minting his coins in 250 BC needs no explanation. Upon his father's death in 240/39 BC, however, Diodotos II, resentful of being passed over as king, seized the diadem and immediately allied himself with Arsakes I, thus forestalling an attempt at recovery on the part of Seleukos II, who, as Justin notes, was in any case preoccupied with wars against Antiochos Hierax and Ptolemy III. Unfortunately, the fate of Antiochos Nikator at this stage is not knowable, but he must have been safely ensconced somewhere in Baktria-Sogdiana and likely surrounded by loyal satraps as he does ultimately become king in about 229/8 BC, probably after overthrowing his older half brother as the consistently youthful image of Diodotos II on his coins and the apparent violent attack on Aï Khanoum at about this same time both would seem to indicate. If Antiochos was the legitimate heir to the Baktrian throne because he was a Seleukid on the distaff side, then his victory over Diodotos II somewhere between 229 and 225 BC might well have been the decisive factor inducing Seleukos II to move against Parthia at precisely this same time. This is why Justin mentions Seleukos' attempt to recover Parthia at this time but says nothing about Baktria. Baktria by this point had returned to loyal vassal status under Antiochos Nikator, thus leaving Parthia vulnerable and ripe for recovery, stripped as it was of its powerful ally.

Moreover, on our revised chronology Euthydemos I would have overthrown Antiochos Nikator around 214–13 BC. This aligns chronologically quite neatly with the anabasis of Antiochos III into Baktria. As Polybios notes, Antiochos called Euthydemos a rebel which he would indeed have been if Antiochos Nikator whom he had just overthrown had been recognized by the Seleukids as their legitimate vassal in Baktria. It is therefore probable that Antiochos III marched into Baktria at this time not to recover a satrapy that had rebelled almost forty years earlier, but to recover a satrapy that had only just revolted from the legitimate Seleukid

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vassal king Antiochos Nikator. The fact that Euthydemos did not claim to have overthrown a rebel, but the descendant of a rebel further supports this claim. It was, to be sure, a weak argument on the part of Euthydemos and one that Antiochos did not accept. This is ultimately why Euthydemos had to resort to threats of allowing the nomadic Scythian hordes to descend into Baktria in order to force Antiochos to recognize his claim to the diadem.⁵² Antiochos perceived the threat and saved face by proposing a marriage between one of his own daughters and Demetrius, a son of Euthydemos,⁵³ and thus, after extracting a formal treaty and receiving military tribute, he returned Baktria to the status of a client kingdom.

Diodotos I thus became king of Baktria in 250 BC just as Justin has suggested. That he did so by means of an agreement with the Seleukids is strongly indicated by the friendly relations between the Seleukid and Diodotid dynasties down to the death of Diodotos I and by Antiochos III's view of Euthydemos I as a rebel, an accusation that would make little sense if the Diodotids were likewise considered rebels. They were not. The only exception to this claim is Diodotos II. His alliance with Arsakes I would clearly have made him a rebel to the Seleukids. But it is clear that Diodotos I, Antiochos Nikator, Euthydemos I, and his son Demetrius I all held the diadem in Baktria as Seleukid vassal kings with Seleukid approval, even if that approval might have been a grudging one.

That the Seleukid kings should have employed sub-kings in the eastern marches of the empire should not be considered unusual as such a policy was not without precedent. Alexander left Porus with the title of king in India⁵⁴ and there is very good reason to believe that he would have left Dareios III himself with this same title in Persia.⁵⁵ Indeed, Seleukos I left Chandragupta Maurya with the title of king and, after he had contracted a marriage alliance with him, ceded part of Arachosia to him as well.⁵⁶ That Chandragupta was vassal king to Seleukos is suggested by the fact that he rendered military tribute to Seleukos as part of the treaty which recognized his royal status.⁵⁷ Thus Appian could legitimately claim, in spite of the handing over of part of Arachosia to Chandragupta, that Seleukos ruled a vast stretch of territory all the way up to the Indus.⁵⁸ It is not surprising then that Antiochos III would apply a very similar policy towards the Euthydemid kings during his anabasis. It is reasonable to conjecture, based upon the pattern of Seleukid behaviour toward their eastern satrapies and the few shreds of evidence pertaining to the accessions of Diodotos I and II, that a similar policy was employed by Antiochos II toward Baktria.

*Rethinking the relationship between hellenistic Baktria and the Seleukid empire***III. Implications for understanding the Seleukid Empire**

What is clear is that too much has been read into Diodotos' minting of coins in his own name and his assumption of a royal title. The standard view of such a move on the part of a satrap is that it must represent a loss of Seleukid control to the rebellious dynast and therefore must also represent a weakness inherent in Seleukid methods of imperial control. Thus Graham Shipley makes the following observation regarding Seleukid methods of governance and control:

When Alexander defeated Dareios he took over the existing system of provinces ruled by satraps, usually Persian men though sometimes local nobles. Alexander appointed both Macedonians and occasionally Persians; Seleukos continued the practice. The Persian system had been designed to ensure the loyalty of the province – meaning, in effect, its ruling elite – as a reliable source of tribute and, when necessary, military manpower on the rare occasion of a major levy. The limited design meant that the Persians did not have to create a complex, interventionist administration; indeed, they seem to have had no aspirations to change the economy or society of a province, desiring to get out of it only what they wanted. The system, however, offered the satrap many opportunities to further his own power, even to the extent of refusing to pay tribute for a long time. If this happened a province could only be won back by military action on the part of the king.⁵⁹

But does every assumption of the royal title on the part of a satrap or a local dynast necessarily imply a rebellion? In clear cases of open rebellion such as those of Achaïos, of Molon or of Arsakes I, there followed almost immediate reprisals from the Seleukids.⁶⁰ But we hear of no attempt whatsoever to recover Baktria until the anabasis of Antiochos III, some thirty to forty years after Diodotos is thought to have revolted. However, as we have seen, there were clear precedents for granting kingship to a dynast in exchange for loyalty and tribute. Alexander exercised such a policy with respect to Porus, Seleukos I did so with regard to Chandragupta Maurya, and Antiochos III employed such a stratagem to retain the loyalty of Euthydemos I in Baktria itself. Given the apparently friendly relations between Diodotos I and Seleukos II and the lack of any attempt to recover Baktria by the latter, we must be correct in conjecturing that Antiochos II applied such a policy toward Diodotos I in the middle of the third century BC.

We must therefore regard the practice of securing the loyalty of local dynasts by conceding the title of king as a deliberate and considered policy on the part of the Seleukids for managing their Eastern frontiers. The Seleukid Empire was to a large degree one of influence, where the Seleukid

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house sat at the centre of a series of personal bilateral relationships with various other dynasties and polities. David Engels, in a recent examination of the causes of the long Seleukid decline, has described the Seleukid Empire as a quasi-feudal sort of polity whereby a central power, in this case the Seleukid dynasty, has only limited control over local and regional officials whose position perforce often became hereditary and independent.⁶¹ This semi-feudal structure of imperial administration was, according to Engels and others, inherited from the Achaemenids.⁶² The Achaemenids certainly had a practice of employing sub- or vassal kings and regarding themselves as ‘Great King’ or ‘King of Kings,’ a practice which appears to have continued inside the independent kingdom of Baktria itself in the reign of Antimachos I as evidenced by a vellum tax receipt issued in the name of kings Antimachos and Eumenes.⁶³ Fascinatingly, while there are coins attesting to the reign of Antimachos I in Baktria,⁶⁴ there is no other evidence beyond this tax receipt itself for the reign of a king Eumenes. Gunnar Dumke thus warns us against concluding that the assumption of a diadem necessarily implies a declaration of sovereign independence.⁶⁵ The fact that the nominally independent kingdom of Baktria seems itself to have employed sub-kings ought to caution us against assuming that a local Seleukid dynast’s adoption of this same title necessarily implied open revolt or true sovereign independence. Indeed, we might also surmise that the practice of employing sub- or vassal kings was simply the preferred mechanism of governance that kings of Baktria had taken over directly from the Seleukids who themselves had precedents for this form of imperial control in the practices of both Alexander and their Achaemenid predecessors.

Graham Shipley thus rightly cautions us against seeing the claim to royal status in over-legalistic terms.⁶⁶ This is sound advice. While Justin notes that Diodotos I revolted (*defecit*) from Seleukid rule, it seems probable that far too much importance has been placed on this single word. Justin likely chose this word because Diodotos no doubt used the political and military pressures that were confronting Antiochos II in order to demand a diadem. Moreover, in the relevant passage from Justin he is speaking mainly of the Parthian revolt, which appears to have been an actual revolt in the truest sense of *deficio*, thus causing considerable confusion in his narrative as he conflates events in Baktria with related events in Parthia, just as he does with the dates surrounding the ‘independence’ of these satrapies. We might therefore argue that if Diodotos I used the great difficulty that the Seleukids must have faced in exercising control over the distant marches of their empire in order to demand greater autonomy and perhaps even a diadem, then Justin’s use of *deficio* to describe Diodotos’ actions in Baktria

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might even be arguably apropos if somewhat overstated. However, there is no reason to assume that this ‘revolt’ constituted a total and decisive break with the Seleukid Empire. On the contrary, the weight of the evidence would suggest that granting of a diadem was a well-established policy of the Seleukids for maintaining control over the eastern frontiers of their empire.

Notes

¹ On the problematic state of the literary sources for hellenistic Bactria and their interpretation cf. Holt 1999, 55–60; Lerner 1999; Coloru 2009.

² Although the bibliography on Greco-Baktrian numismatics is vast, the fullest and most up-to-date treatments can be found in Bopearachchi 1991; Holt 1999; and Kritt 2001.

³ For a general summary of the most current archaeological research on the hellenistic Far East cf. Mairs 2011, esp. Ch. 5.

⁴ Justin 41.4. Post mortem Alexandri Magni cum inter successores eius Orientis regna diuiderentur, nullo Macedonum dignante Parthorum imperium Staganori, externo socio, traditur. Postea diductis Macedonibus in bellum ciuile cum ceteris superioris Asiae populis Eumenes secuti sunt, quo uicto ad Antigonum transiere. Post hunc a Nikatore Seleuco ac mox ab Antiocho et successoribus eius possessi, a cuius pronepote Seleuco primum defecere primo Punico bello, L. Manlio Vulsone M. Atilio Regulo consulibus. Huius defectionis impunitatem illis duorum fratrum regum, Seleuci et Antiochi, discordia dedit, qui dum inuicem eripere sibi regnum uolunt, persequi defectores omiserunt. Eodem tempore etiam Theodotus, mille urbium Baktrianarum praefectus, defecit regemque se appellari iussit, quod exemplum secuti totius Orientis populi a Macedonibus defecere. Erat eo tempore Arsaces, uir sicut incertae originis, ita uirtutis expertae. Hic solitus latrocinii et rapto uiuere accepta opinione Seleucum a Gallis in Asia uictum, solutus regis metu, cum praedonum manu Parthos ingressus praefectum eorum Andragoran oppressit sublatoque eo imperium gentis inuasit. Non magno deinde post tempore Hyrcanorum quoque regnum occupauit, atque ita duarum ciuitatum imperio praeditus grandem exercitum parat metu cum Seleuci et Theodoti, Baktrianorum regis. Sed cito morte Theodoti metu liberatus cum filio eius, et ipso Theodoto, foedus ac pacem fecit, nec multo post cum Seleuco rege ad defectores persequendos ueniente congressus uictor fuit; quem diem Parthi exinde sollemnem uelut initium libertatis obseruant.

⁵ *Consuls of the Roman Republic*, <http://www.ualberta.ca/~csmackay/Consuls.List.html> (Last accessed January 18, 2013).

⁶ Sidky 2000, 140–1.

⁷ App. *Syr.* 65; Euseb. *Chron.* 207c; Jerome *Chron.* 1769.

⁸ Smith 1844, 1018–19; Gardner and Poole 1886, XX; Narain 2003, 26; Mitchener 1975, 34; Grainger 1997, 87.

⁹ Tarn 1997, 72–3; Newell 1978, 249; Bopearachchi 1991, 42; Holt 1999, 94–101; Sidky 2000, 140–5; Adams 2006, 47.

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¹⁰ cf. Strab. *Geog.* 11.9.2–3.

¹¹ Mitchner 1975, types 63–69, pp. 41; Bopearachchi 1991: # Diodote I et II, série 1–4, pp. 147–9; Holt 1999, Appendix A, Series A, C, and E, pp. 140–50; cf. Figure 1.

¹² Mitchner 1975, types 70–75, pp. 41–42; Bopearachchi 1991: # Diodote I et II, série 5–15, pp. 149–53; Holt 1999, Appendix A, Series B, D, and F, pp. 151–63; cf. Figure 2.

¹³ Cf. Mitchner 1975, types 46–62, pp. 28–32; Newell 1978, 228–249, specimens 657–726; Kritt 1996, *passim*; Hoover 2007, series 97, 99–100, 121–138.

¹⁴ Cf. Mitchner 1975, types 63–83, pp. 39–44; Bopearachchi 1991: # Diodote I et II, série 1–15, pp. 147–153.

¹⁵ Sidky 2000: 131; cf. Kritt 1996.

¹⁶ Narain 1957; Mitchner 1975; Bopearachchi 1991; Tarn 1997; Holt 1999; Sidky 2000; Kritt 2001.

¹⁷ Cf. Kritt 2001 for a more current review of the coinage. However, Kritt does not materially alter Holt's reconstruction.

¹⁸ Holt 1999, 92.

¹⁹ Holt 1999, 94–101; cf. also Gardner and Poole 1886, XX; Narain 1957, 27–8; Mitchner 1975, 36; Tarn 1997, 72–4; Whitehead 1969, 68; Bengtson 1969, 252; Bernard 1985, 151–2; Grainger 2010, 141; Bopearachchi 1991, 41–6 refuses to allocate Diodotid coinage to a specific Diodotos.

²⁰ Holt 1999, 92, n.9. See Figure 3 above.

²¹ Holt 1999, 101.

²² See p. 152 above.

²³ Tarn 1997, 73; Holt 1999, 100–101.

²⁴ Holt 1999, 100.

²⁵ Jakobsson 2011, 26.

²⁶ Jakobsson 2011, 22–23.

²⁷ Jakobsson 2011, 29–30.

²⁸ Polybios, *Histories*, 11.34, 1–2. καὶ γὰρ αὐτὸς ἦν ὁ Εὐθύδημος Μάγνης, πρὸς ὃν ἀπελογίζετο φάσκων ὡς οὐ δικαίως αὐτὸν Ἀντίοχος ἐκ τῆς βασιλείας ἐκβαλεῖν σπουδάζει: γεγονέναι γὰρ οὐκ αὐτὸς ἀποστάτης τοῦ βασιλέως, ἀλλ' ἐτέρων ἀποστάντων ἐπανελόμενος τοὺς ἐκείνων ἐγγόνους, οὕτως κρατῆσαι τῆς Βακτριανῶν ἀρχῆς.

²⁹ Holt 1999, 94–101.

³⁰ Cf. Bopearachchi 1991, 177, Agathocle, série 13.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Eodem tempore etiam Theodotus, mille urbium Baktrianarum praefectus, defecit regemque se appellari iussit, quod exemplum secuti totius Orientis populi a Macedonibus defecere.

³³ Cf. Bickerman 1943; Wolski 1947; Musti 1984; Brodersen 1986.

³⁴ See p. 152 above.

³⁵ Cf. Coşkun this volume.

³⁶ Sherwin-White and Kuhrt 1993, 103–13; Shipley 2000, 283. For a general summary of the population and productivity of hellenistic Baktria see Aperghis 2004, 43–44. On the general importance of Baktria in the Achaemenid period and to Alexander the Great, cf. Holt 1995.

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³⁷ Cf. Just. *Procl.* 41. For the epithet ‘Sōtēr’ ascribed to Diodotos I see the commemorative medals of Agathocles in Bopearachchi 1991, 178, série 14.

³⁸ Bopearachchi 1994, 516–17; Holt 1999, 98 *contra* S. Kovalenko 1996.

³⁹ Holt 1999, 99.

⁴⁰ Strab. *Geog.* 11.9.3.

⁴¹ Plut. *Alex.* 47.4; Q. Curt. 8.4.25.

⁴² Again, the date for the Battle of Ancyra will have to be reconsidered in light of Coşkun (this volume).

⁴³ Jakobsson 2011, 21.

⁴⁴ Cf. McAuley, ‘The Genealogy of the Seleukids.’

<http://www.Seleukid-genealogy.com/Home.html>, especially ‘The Related Dynasties,’ http://www.Seleukid-genealogy.com/Related_Dynasties.html. (Last consulted on April 8th, 2013).

⁴⁵ Tarn 1997, 73.

⁴⁶ Cf. Holt 1999, 67–72 for a well-reasoned rejection of Tarn’s reconstruction.

⁴⁷ Jakobsson 2011, 21–2. See McAuley this volume for the argument that it was far more normal for daughters of princesses married out from the Seleukid house to take Seleukid names.

⁴⁸ Narain 1957, 308 gives a reign of ca. 13 years. Holt 1999, 101–6 suggests a reign of ten years. Jakobsson 2011, 27 follows Holt and provides a reign of years for the second Diodotos. Mitchiner 1975, Bopearachchi 1991, and Sidky 2000 refuse to assign dates to the reigns of the Diodoti.

⁴⁹ Holt 1999, 63, 106.

⁵⁰ Jakobsson 2011, 26.

⁵¹ Note that Narain 1957, 308 gives Diodotos II a reign of 13 years bringing his reign to an end precisely in the year 225 BC.

⁵² Polyb. *Hist.* 11.34.3–5.

⁵³ Polyb. *Hist.* 11.34.7–9.

⁵⁴ Diod. Sic. 17.89.6.

⁵⁵ cf. Diod. Sic. 17.54.6.

⁵⁶ cf. Strab. *Geog.* 15.2.9; App. *Syr.* 55.

⁵⁷ Strab. *Geog.* 15.2.9.

⁵⁸ App. *Syr.* 55.

⁵⁹ Shipley 2000, 293–4.

⁶⁰ Polyb. *Hist.* 5.40–54, 57–8, 87.

⁶¹ Engels 2011, 20.

⁶² Engels 2011, 19, n. 2.

⁶³ Clarysse and Thompson 2007.

⁶⁴ Cf. Bopearachchi 1991, 183–2, Antimaque I Théos, série 1–10

⁶⁵ Dumke 2012, 392: ‘Man sollte also vorsichtig sein und den Königstitel nicht gleich unbedingt als eine unabhängige Machtposition verstehen’.

⁶⁶ Shipley 2000, 283–4.

