

STANISŁAW KALITA

Institute of History, Jagiellonian University
Cracow

THE COINS OF DIODOTUS OF BACTRIA AND THE PROBLEM OF DATING THE BACTRIAN SECESSION

In Book 41, Chapter 4 of the *Epitoma Historiarum Philipicarum* Pompei Trogi by Marcus Junianus Justinus (a Roman writer who made a summary of the historical work by the Pompeius Trogus mentioned in the title), we find the following passage:

Post mortem Alexandri Magni cum inter successores eius Orientis regna dividerentur, nullo Macedonum dignante Parthorum imperium, Staganori, externo socio, traduntur. Postea deductis Macedonibus in bellum civile cum ceteris superioribus Asiae populis Eumenem secuti sunt, quo victo ad Antigonom transiere. Post hunc a Nicatore Seleuco ac mox ab Antiocho et successoribus eius possessi, a cuius pronepote Seleuco primum defecere primo Punico bello, L. Manlio Vulsons M Atilio Regulo consulibus. Huius defectionis impunitatem illis duorum fratrum regum, Seleuci et Antiochi, discordia dedit, qui dum invicem eripere sibi regnum volunt, persequi defectores omiserunt. Eodem tempore etiam Diodotus, mille urbium

Bactrianarum praefectus, defecit regemque se appellari iussit, quod exemplum secuti totius Orientis populi a Macedonibus defecere. Erat eo tempore Arsaces, vir sicut incertae originis, ita virtutis expertae. Hic solitus latrocinii et raptu vivere accepta opinione Seleucum a Gallis in Asia victum,¹ solutus regis metu, cum praedonum manu Parthos² ingressus praefectum eorum Andragoram oppressit sublatoque eo imperium gentis invasit.

Arsaces is said to have remained in hostile relations with both Seleucus and Diodotus, but after the latter's death he concluded an alliance with his son, who also bore the name Diodotus.

At the conclusion of the chapter, the Roman writer informs us that *...nec multo post cum Seleuco rege ad defectores persequendos veniente congressus victor fuit; quem diem Parthi exinde solemnem velut initium libertatis observant.*³

The events described by Justin find confirmation in the numismatic material coming from Bactria. The coins emitted in this satrapy during the time of Diodotus I reflect the process by which this province was gradually transformed into an independent kingdom.

Numismatists know of three groups of coins associated with the name Diodotus. The first group consists of silver coins struck by the satrap of Bactria in the name of Antiochus II, with a portrait of the Seleucid on the obverse, and an image of Apollo, the patron god of the ruling dynasty, on the reverse. The second group is characterized by the appearance of the portrait of a completely different person (assumed to be Diodotus) on the obverse, and an image of Zeus on the reverse. The legend continues to name Antiochus. Finally, the third group consists of coins struck on the model of the second group, but with an altered legend, containing the name of Diodotus associated with the royal title.

A serious interpretational problem is posed by the fact that the last

¹ This refers to the catastrophic defeat inflicted on Seleucus II by Gallic mercenaries, hired by his brother, Antiochus Hierax, during the "War of the Brothers" (239–236 BC); see Justin 26.2.

² Justin is probably thinking here of the inhabitants of the province of Parthia, not of the tribesmen of Arsaces, known as the Parni, and only later, after the Arsacid state had been founded, called Parthians.

³ Justin 41.4.

two groups of coins include specimens with two different portraits. One presents a young man; the second, a clearly older man, of mature age. Various solutions have been suggested for this problem. It is explained, for instance, that we are dealing with two versions of the portrait of the same person, Diodotus I, but one of them, the one that presents him as a youth, is taken for an idealized portrait.⁴ The majority of scholars, however, have accepted the argument that the portrait of the older man depicts Diodotus I, while the second is his son, Diodotus II. It has proven difficult to explain why the son, of whom we know from the source quoted above that he assumed power after the death of his father, would repeat the same evolution of images and legends on the coins he emitted, even though he was now himself ruler in his own right. The most convincing arguments are those presented by several scholars, who suggest that father and son jointly exercised authority as satrap of Bactria while still in dependency on the Seleucids, and simultaneously emitted coins that illustrate by their evolution the changes in their position, until the moment when they jointly assumed the title of King.⁵ This theory seems to find all the more substantiation in the fact that examples of co-regency are known from Hellenistic times, and it has been directly confirmed by the fact that there were co-rulers in Bactria itself.⁶ Polybius, also, in describing the circumstances surrounding the negotiations between Antiochus III and Euthydemus, King of Bactria, reports the latter's words, which include a statement about the "men" who sundered Bactria from the kingdom of the Seleucids.⁷ In this passage Polybius may have in mind both Diodotuses, father and son, acting at the same time. It should also be observed that the model according to which Diodotus I and Diodotus II simultaneously wielded power in Bactria, while gradually gaining independence from Antiochus II, explains all the combinations of

⁴ O. Bopearachchi, *Monnaies gréco-bactriennes et indo-grecques. Catalogue raisonné* (Paris 1991), p. 43.

⁵ *Ibidem*.

⁶ The Ashmolean Museum at Oxford has in its possession an extremely interesting document (see J. R. Rea, R. C. Senior, and A. S. Hollis, "A Tax Receipt from Hellenistic Bactria", *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik*, 104 [1994], pp. 261–280). This is a confirmation of a tax payment, dated according to the year of the reign of three simultaneously ruling monarchs, two named Antimachus, and one named Eumenes. This last is as yet unknown from any coins.

⁷ Polybius 11.34.

portraits, legends, and presentations of divinities which occur on these coins.⁸

Discussion on the interpretation of the two different portraits on these coins associated with the name Diodotus has involved primarily numismatists, even though the conclusions refer directly to the political history of Hellenistic Bactria. Those historians who deal with this matter have been especially concerned, however, with the interpretation of the passage from Justin quoted at the beginning of this article. The fundamental point of dispute is the date of the beginning of the independence of the kingdom of the Bactrian Greeks. After many years of dispute, two camps have been clearly delimited: the advocates of "late" and "early" dating. The first group opts for the date of 239 BC, while the second, considerably in the majority, accepts the date of 256 BC, or, with certain corrections, 250.

It would appear to be a truism to assert that, in establishing the most probable picture of historical events, a thorough analysis of all the available source material is necessary, in this case the text and the coinage. One gets the impression, however, that in some cases the inferences to be derived from an analysis of the numismatic sources have been treated with slight interest, as "weaker" evidence than the results of historiographical analysis, and as a result not useful for purposes of verifying the latter. On the other hand, numismatists, for whom the value of coins as source materials is not open to the slightest question, seem to have a rather nonchalant attitude towards Justin's account, which does not lack for ambiguity.

It would be interesting, then, to trace how the arguments have been formulated by the one side and the other, and then to ascertain how the conclusions based on the source text have been influenced, or not, by taking seriously the weight of the evidence provided by coinage.

We may cite at the beginning the arguments advanced by the advocates of the later dating for the independence of the Greco-Bactrian kingdom. This conclusion is based primarily on the assumption that the events described by Justin – the secession of Parthia, the sundering of Bactria from the Seleucid kingdom, and the civil war in the kingdom of the Seleucids (the so-called "War of the Brothers") took place more or

⁸ Bopearachchi, p. 44.

less simultaneously, with the proviso that the secession of Parthia (which does not refer to the foundation of the Parthian state by Arsaces!) should be placed first, and the establishment of Bactrian independence should be dated somewhat later, most likely in 239 BC, during the "War of the Brothers" between Seleucus II Callinicus and Antiochus Hierax, or just before it.⁹

Prof. Józef Wolski, whose views are the most highly representative for the group of scholars who favor this dating, has presented the following sequence of events in Central Asia in the mid-3rd century BC:

- 247 BC – beginning of the so-called "Era of the Arsacids"; Arsaces assumes the leadership of the Parni
- 245 BC – revolt of the satrap Andragoras; Parthia lost by the Seleucids
- 239 BC – secession of Bactria; the satrap Diodotus proclaims himself King¹⁰
- 238 BC – Arsaces conquers Parthia¹¹

It is not difficult to notice that virtually all the events mentioned here fall within the reign of Seleucus II Callinicus (246–226 BC), decidedly after the reign of Antiochus II (261–246 BC). However, the consular date of 256 BC given by Justin (Pompeius Trogus?) in reference to the secession of Parthia falls within the reign of Antiochus. Justin also adds that all this is supposed to have occurred during the First Punic War, i.e. between 264 and 241 BC. Assuming that the loss of Parthia took place, as Justin indicates, during the reign of Seleucus II, we are confronted with a contradiction in dates referring to the same events, since the reign of Seleucus II does in fact coincide with the years of the First Punic war, but the consular date does not fit. Moreover, Eusebius, in writing on the beginnings of the reign of the Arsacids (in which context he does not

⁹ J. Wolski, "The Decay of the Iranian Empire of the Seleucids and the Chronology of the Parthian Beginnings", *Berytus* 12 (1956–58), pp. 5–52; *Imperium Arsacydów* (Poznań 1996), pp. 62 f. (note 70).

¹⁰ This date has been subjected to a certain modification, including in the last-cited work of Prof. Wolski, where the author argues that the assumption by Diodotus of the royal title should be placed somewhat earlier, during the Third Syrian War.

¹¹ Wolski, "Decay", p. 52; *Imperium*, p. 62. The dates given should of course be treated as approximate.

mention Bactria), dates this event precisely, using the Greek calendar: in the third year of the 132 Olympiad (250 BC).¹²

Bactria is supposed to have gained its independence under Diodotus I, no earlier than in 239 BC, as Justin's text seems to indicate by placing this event in the same period as the "War of the Brothers" (239–236 BC).¹³

Some time ago it was observed that the consular date given by Justin can be corrected to the year 250 BC.¹⁴ It is highly likely that Justin or Pompeius Trogus has confused two consuls of similar name who held office within an interval of a few years: M. Atilius Regulus, who was consul suffectus along with L. Manlius Vulso in 256 BC, and C. Atilius Regulus, who was consul ordinarius along with the same L. Manlius Vulso 6 years later, in 250 BC. In 256, the other consul besides Manlius was Q. Caedicius, but his death before the expiry of his term made it necessary to elect a suffectus. This was, as just stated, M. Atilius Regulus, a figure known from his involvement in the First Punic War.¹⁵ As far as we know, it was not the custom to designate the year using the names of suffect consuls, so it would be strange if in this case Justin was referring to the year 256 BC. The year 250 BC seems more likely, and the error may have been committed by a scribe copying Justin's manuscript, since the historian sometime omits the initial of the consul's praenomen, or by the author himself, for whom M. Atilius Regulus was more associated with the period of the First Punic War, which in any event is cited as an additional chronological element.

If we assume that Justin was thinking of the year 250 BC, and that he was thus understood by educated readers in antiquity, it is possible that Eusebius was using precisely his account in citing the same date (but according to the Olympian calendar) for the beginning of Parthian independence. Neither the year 256 BC, however, nor the more likely 250 BC fall within the time frame marked by the "War of the Brothers", or even by the reign of Seleucus II.

Prof. Wolski states, then, that Justin's consular date has no historical

¹² Eusebius, *Chronica* 2.120. At another point (I.207), Eusebius also gives the approximate date of the 133rd Olympiad, which translates to 248–244 BC, a date which also partially overlaps with the reign of Antiochus II.

¹³ Wolski, "Decay", pp. 42–43.

¹⁴ A. K. Narain, *The Indo-Greeks* (Oxford 1957), p. 14, note 4; Wolski, *Imperium*, p. 54.

¹⁵ Wolski, "Decay", p. 51; *Imperium*, p. 54.

weight, even if Eusebius took it for correct, while the source of the confusion is an error committed by the Roman writer, who improperly associated facts from the history of the Hellenistic world with his own native calendar.¹⁶ This is taken as proof that Justin's knowledge of the history of the East was scanty.

If we give credence to the statement that the Parthians "seceded from the Macedonians during the reign of Seleucus Nicator's great-grandson Seleucus" (a cuius pronepote Seleuco primum defecere), disregarding the consular date, which indeed does not fit this period, and assume that the "War of the Brothers" mentioned next by Justin and the secession of Diodotus, referred to as having taken place "at that same time" (eodem tempore) were somewhat later events, we can reach only one justifiable conclusion, that the sequence of events and their dates were such as proposed by Prof. Wolski.

Another argument sometimes advanced is also worth mentioning, that if the secessions of Parthia and Bactria had taken place in the reign of Antiochus II, he would certainly have reacted decisively with an armed intervention, but the sources mention nothing of the kind. They do mention the war waged by Seleucus II against the Parthians shortly after the conclusion of the "War of the Brothers".¹⁷ The latter is supposed to have provided an excellent opportunity, as Justin remarks,¹⁸ for all sorts of centrifugal actions, which had been much harder during the lifetime of Antiochus II, who governed the Seleucid kingdom singlehandedly. The state of permanent political crisis under Seleucus II, which was not confined to the several years of the "War of the Brothers", began well before this conflict, at the moment when the Third Syrio-Egyptian War broke out. Thus the external and internal circumstances accompanying the reign of Seleucus Callinicus appear to argue in favor of that interpretation of Justin's text which places the secessions of both Parthia and Bactria within the first several years of precisely that period.

There remains the "inconvenient" numismatic evidence, in the form of coins struck by Diodotus's mints, first in the name of Antiochus II, and later in Diodotus's own name. The advocates of the later dating for

¹⁶ Wolski, *"Decay"*, pp. 51-52.

¹⁷ Justin 41.4; Wolski, *"Decay"*, p. 44.

¹⁸ Justin 41.4.

Bactria's independence have suggested the possibility that Diodotus began to emit coins with his own name in the legend during the Third Syrian War (246–241 BC) between Seleucus II and Ptolemy III, just after the death of Antiochus II, or in any event after 245 BC, when the revolt of Andragoras took place.¹⁹

How is this problem viewed by the advocates of the second theory advanced above? An extensive discussion on the dating of the secession of Bactria and Parthia can be found in A. W. Frye's monograph on the history of ancient Iran.²⁰ This author advocates the rather extreme view that Diodotus's revolt cannot in fact be precisely dated, and that all the arguments advanced by the defenders of the earlier and later dates are guilty of subjectivism, while the dates given by Justin for the secession of Parthia (the consular date and the beginning of the reign of Seleucus II) are only approximate, since the ancient author was not much concerned with the precise location in time of this event.²¹

Incidentally, Frye does not mention the possible shift in the consular date to 250 BC.

Juxtaposing the facts of the evolution of Antiochus II's coins emitted in Bactria with the lack of coins from Seleucus II in this province, and assuming that the dates given in the sources are inexact, Frye favors a vision of evolutionary changes in the political system in Central Asia. According to him, we are not dealing with a single event that can be dated precisely, but rather with a process of loosening ties between the Central Asian satrapies and the center of the Seleucid state. It should be noted here that even Prof. Wolski believes that Bactria became independent gradually.²² This process is supposed to have begun while Antiochus II was still alive (as witness the coins of Diodotus and the consular date given by Justin), and to have ended when his son ascended the throne. Frye decidedly rejects the position of Wolski, that both the secession of Bactria and the conquest of Parthia by Arsaces took place during the "War of the Brothers".

A number of comments on the Parthian chronology, the elements of

¹⁹ Wolski, "Decay", p. 45, note 7; *Imperium*, p. 63, note 70.

²⁰ A. W. Frye, *The History of Ancient Iran*, vol VII: *Greco-Bactrians, Sakas, and Parthians* (Munich 1984), pp. 177–204.

²¹ *Ibidem*, pp. 178 and 180.

²² Wolski, "Decay", p. 45; *Imperium*, p. 62.

which contained in the passage from Justin are closely bound to the dating of the beginnings of Bactrian independence, are also offered by Domenico Musti in his article in the *Cambridge Ancient History*.²³ Like Frye, Musti disagrees with Professor's Wolski's thesis on the later dating. He argues that the discrepancy between the chronological specification of the Parthian secession ("in the reign of Seleucus") and the date from the Roman calendar ascribed to that event (256 or 250 BC) does not result from the association of the correct element of the Hellenistic chronology with the wrong consular date, but vice versa: it is supposed to indicate that Parthia's independence is dated precisely according to a calendar the author knew well. The addition to this dating of the formulation "in the reign of Seleucus" is supposed to have been an error caused by unfamiliarity with the chronology of the Seleucid dynasty. In other words, the consular date given by Justin, as a "foreign element" in the world of Seleucid chronology, not well known to the Roman author, strengthens the whole construction, serving to lend it at least one fixed point of reference.

Musti also proposes a distinctly different way of reading Justin's text, distinguishing within it pieces of information that refer to two different phases in the process of Parthia's separation. The first phase would be identified by the consular date (though anachronistically placed during the reign of Seleucus II), and Musti would place within this phase the beginning of the Parnian invasion of Parthia, while the second phase, associated with the Fraternal War, would have brought to an end the process, spread out over a long period of time, by which the former Seleucid empire came to be permanently divided.²⁴ As can be seen, Musti does not refer directly to the "Bactrian problem" in Justin's text, but his views on the strength of the various chronological elements and the proposal for a more respectful treatment of the consular date are already in a certain sense connected with the issue of Diodotus's coins, which lean more heavily in the direction of precisely this date, rather than the "War of the Brothers", where Justin appears to have placed the revolt of the satrap of Bactria.

²³ D. Musti, "The Date of the Secession of Bactria and Parthia from the Seleucid Kingdom", *CAH* 7.1 (1984), pp. 219–220.

²⁴ A critique of Musti's position is given by Kai Brodersen, "The Date of the Secession of Parthia from the Seleucid Kingdom", *Historia* 35.3 (1986), pp. 378–381.

The earlier dating of the Bactrian secession is strongly favored by Osmund Bopearachchi, one of the most competent scholars presently studying Greco-Bactrian and Indo-Greek numismatics. His conviction is based on the conclusions he derives from the fact that the coins emitted by Diodotus are associated exclusively with Antiochus II, and their evolution indicates clearly that the entire process by which the Bactrian Greek kingdom attained independence took place precisely during the reign of this representative of the Seleucid dynasty.²⁵

On the basis of the views presented above – which of course do not comprise an exhaustive catalogue of the opinions expressed in the course of discussion, but are sufficiently representative for the majority of them – it can clearly be seen that the later chronology for the secessions of Bactria and Parthia is based exclusively on conclusions derived from the interpretation of the text. Conclusions inferred from an analysis of Diodotus's coinage are omitted, or regarded as less essential.

The arguments advanced in support of their position by the advocates of the earlier chronology for the Bactrian secession are, for all practical purposes, exclusively numismatic. Justin's account and the dates he gives (which after all deal mostly with Parthian affairs, and not Bactrian) are treated as highly imprecise, unable to withstand confrontation with the numismatic materials. If the consular date is taken seriously, at the very most the act of the Parthian secession is shifted to the year 250 BC (256 BC), while no one states clearly that this date may refer to the emancipation of Diodotus.²⁶ The shifting of this event to the vicinity of 250 BC is based virtually exclusively on numismatic arguments.²⁷ No ef-

²⁵ Bopearachchi, p. 42.

²⁶ Some mention of a way of reading Justin's text, which would make it possible to treat the secession of Parthia and Bactria as events occurring more or less at the same time, can be found in Narain (p. 14, note 7). The author is careful to note, however, that this need not imply precise synchronicity, and proposes that the expression *eodem tempore* be read as *during the same period* rather than *at the same time*. Thus he places emphasis on the dispersion over time of the process by which Bactria attained full independence. It should also be noted that such a method of reading Justin's text has not been expressly suggested by contemporary advocates of the "early" dating of the Bactrian secession, and it remains forgotten on the back shelves of long neglected arguments and suggestions.

²⁷ The suggestion has occasionally been made in the literature that Justin has confused the sequence of events, and that he should have put the Bactrian secession before the revolt in Parthia (Narain, p. 14).

fort is made in any particularly obvious way to reconcile the evidence in the text with the evidence from the coins. It seems, however, that such an effort can be made, such that Justin's passage, though complicated, provides a good deal of entirely precise chronological information, after a slight change in how it is read; more importantly, this information is no longer in contradiction with the conclusions advanced by numismatists.

We shall begin with a close look at Justin's text. As mentioned above, the central assumptions made by the advocates of the later chronology are as follows:

1. The consular date given by Justin should be rejected, since it does not fall within the limits of the reign of Seleucus II; it should be assumed that only the phrase "in the reign of Seleucus Nicator's great-grandson Seleucus [a cuius pronepote Seleuco]" constitutes credible chronological evidence. By the same token the terminus post quem is set at 246 BC.
2. After this date, but before the end of the First Punic War, i.e. prior to 241 BC, Parthia is "lost" to the Seleucid kingdom. Prof. Wolski proposes the date of 245 BC. This does not yet refer to the Parthia of the Arsacids, but rather to a short-lived state governed by a disloyal ex-satrap.
3. Next, the "War of the Brothers" breaks out (239–236 BC) between Seleucus II and his brother, Antiochus Hierax, and in the course of this war there take place, almost simultaneously, the secession of Diodotus and the slightly later conquest of Parthia by Arsaces, the chief of the Parni, which marks the beginning of the Arsacid state.

The acceptance of this schema virtually compels us to disregard the numismatic evidence. In the best case, Diodotus's coins are treated as a source of lesser importance, and the conclusions derived from their analysis cannot have the same significance as premises resulting from historiographical sources.

We should seriously consider, however, the possibility that the information contained in the relevant passage from Justin's *Epitome* can be read in a different way.

It was as a result of the later "War of the Brothers" that the first secession of Parthia was not suppressed. On this point it is hard to dispute the obvious gist of the source text, and all scholars agree in reading it this

way. The expression which follows in Justin's text, "at that same time" (*eodem tempore*), regarding the secession of Diodotus, can be understood, however, not as linking this secession with the "War of the Brothers" (*fratrum discordia*), which in any event has no precise chronological reference in the text, but with earlier events, i.e. the first secession of Parthia, "during the First Punic War" (*primo Punico bello*). Without undue difficulty one can treat the passage about the "War of the Brothers" as an insertion, clarifying the circumstances explaining the persistence of a particular state of affairs in Parthia, and not as a successive stage of events described chronologically, one after another.

Justin's text is not entirely clear. He himself, after all, was condensing someone else's work, and it may be presumed that in many places, as here, he has fallen into a trap which many a more competent author has likewise failed to observe when noting in abbreviated form someone else's long and precise account. Justin may have subjected to unintentional simplification a text containing a description of a complicated process, thus giving a picture that essentially distorts the reality of the situation. At any rate, it would be very difficult to question this version, were it not for the numismatic material. If we treat Diodotus' coins as an important element in the process of getting to the best documented picture of events in Bactria in the 3rd century BC, we cannot overlook the fact that the coins emitted by the satrap of Bactria, later its king, connect him only with Antiochus II. If we had only Diodotus' coins, it would not arouse the slightest hesitation to date the full independence of Bactria to a *terminus ante quem* no later than the vicinity of Antiochus II's death, i.e. ca. 246 BC.

Assuming that it would be possible to read the sentence "at that same time the secession of Diodotus also took place" (*eodem tempore etiam Diodotus (...) defecit*) as referring, not to the period of the "War of the Brothers", but to the secession of Parthia in the reign of "Seleucus, during the First Punic War" (a cuius pronepote Seleuco primum defecere primo Punico bello), we are quite close on the time line to the date of Antiochus II's death. Thus there arises the possibility that *eodem tempore* the satrap Diodotus, who earlier, during Antiochus' lifetime, alone or with his son, struck coins in the Bactrian mints with the likeness of the Seleucid, and later with his own portrait (though consistently in the name of Antiochus) ultimately decided to assume the royal title. The coins with his

portrait, name, and the title basileus in the legend are the traces of this process.

There remains unresolved the question of the consular date. Frye points out that too much weight should not be given to the precision of the dates, which, in his opinion, were used by ancient authors for purposes of general orientation. He believes that the consular date given (even 256 BC) is close enough to the first year of Seleucus's reign that it can be taken as referring to the same historical moment.²⁸

There is a rather bold claim, and perhaps not overly logical. Why would Justin (or Trogus), intending to identify the approximate date of a certain event, use as precise a chronological reference as a consular year? We are left, then, with the position taken by Prof. Wolski,²⁹ that Justin, unfamiliar with the chronology of the Seleucids, assigned the wrong date from the Roman calendar to the beginning of the reign of Seleucus II, or with the quite contrary view of Musti,³⁰ that Justin in full awareness and quite properly used the consular date (which should be understood as 250 BC).

Musti, in reference to Parthia,³¹ and Frye, writing about Bactria,³² see the independence of both satrapies as a process, which had already begun to unfold in the days of Antiochus II. The consular date, which Justin cites in one breath with the name of Seleucus II, may thus refer to the beginnings of the acquisition of independence by Parthia and Bactria, while the reign of Seleucus, especially the "War of the Brothers", saw the closing of this process, the ultimate severance of any kind of formal bond between the rebellious provinces and their former metropolis. In this case, the revolt of the satrap of Parthia took place ca. 250 BC, and at more or less the same time (*eodem tempore*) Diodotus of Bactria proclaimed himself king. It should thus be assumed that the first coins with his (and his son's) portrait and the legend of Antiochus were struck before 250 BC. In his abbreviated and imprecise account, Justin has formed a sort of "flattening out" of events, but there remain the con-

²⁸ Frye, p. 180.

²⁹ Wolski, "Decay", p. 52.

³⁰ Musti, pp. 219-220.

³¹ *Ibidem*.

³² Frye, p. 179.

crete dates derived from Pompeius's Trogus's more detailed account, dates which the less skilled author of the summary could not clarify.³³

There remains the task of making a brief analysis of both the two theories presented above in reference to the chronology of the origins of the Greco-Bactrian kingdom. We have two positions from which to choose: the first, which assumes that the foundation of the kingdom took place no earlier than 239 BC, and the second, according to which we should accept the date of 250 BC.

If we accept the first view, we shall have to acknowledge that the consular date given by Justin as the proper date for the secession of Parthia is in error. The separation of Bactria from the Seleucid state is situated at one time with the "War of the Brothers" that began in 239 BC or just before. The coins of the first monarch of Bactria, Diodotus, which do not point to any connection between the satrapy of Bactria and Seleucus II, are regarded as evidence of less weight, or in any event not providing sufficiently precise chronological information. The lack of a portrait of Seleucus II on the coins of Diodotus is explained by the rapid severance of the last bonds joining Bactria with the Seleucids, at the beginning of the reign of Seleucus II.³⁴

The second theory assumes that the numismatic sources are at least equally essential as the written, and places the secession of Bactria earlier, during the reign of Antiochus II, based on the conclusions derived from the analysis of Diodotus' coinage. If we assume – and this is not clearly articulated in the literature – that Justin's text can be read in such a way as to allow for the simultaneity (at least approximate) of the achievement of independence by Diodotus' Bactria and the first secession of Parthia, then we reach a point of non-contradiction; and if we further assume that Justin's consular date is not in error, then we have

³³ One may venture the conjecture that from the perspective of Justin – a Roman writing an abbreviation of the work of Trogus several centuries after the events therein depicted – what happened in Parthia, i.e. the secession of Andragros and the birth of the Arsacid kingdom, was essentially one and the same event, though spread out over several stages. This event may be termed the "*birth of the Parthian state*". Perhaps Justin, paying no attention to "trivial" details, has combined in one sentence, under what seemed to him to be one date, two different events, which flowed from the author's point of view into one: namely, the secession of Andragoras, which would line up with the consular date, and the invasion of the Parni "*in the reign of Seleucus*".

³⁴ Wolski, *Imperium*, p. 63, note 70.

full consistency of the conclusions resulting from an analysis of the written text and the numismatic material.

It is clear, then, that only one of the theories presented above – i.e., the one which favors the date of 250 BC for the initial date of the Greco-Bactrian kingdom – can find support both in the written source and in the coins. The theory of the “late” dating always leaves us in a situation in which we must either treat the coins as source material of little value for reaching ultimate conclusions, or create hard-to-maintain argumentation about placing the portrait of a deceased king on coins emitted during the reign of his successor.

In a situation in which one theory finds arguments only in an arguable interpretation of the source text, while the second is based independently on conclusions arising from analyses of both the text and the coins, the conclusion as to which of the two is more credible is self-evident.

At this point it is worthwhile noticing, with due respect for numismatics, that in the case under discussion, of the two types of sources that are subject to historical “processing,” the text proved to be the weaker, prompting considerable doubts and allowing for contradictory interpretations, while the coins, unambiguously pointing to a solution, also made it possible to amend the way in which this fragment of Justin’s text is read, so that a self-consistent and acceptable picture emerges of at least one fragment of the still unclear and poorly documented history of Hellenistic Bactria.

Sequence of Events in Central Asia during the Third Century BC

- before 250 BC – first manifestations of the independence of Diodotus, satrap of Bactria, from Antiochus II
- ca. 250 BC – Secession of Parthia governed by a Seleucid satrap; the satrap of Bactria, Diodotus, proclaims himself king
- after 239 BC – the “War of the Brothers” prevents the Seleucids from reasserting their control over Parthia and Bactria
- after 239 BC – incursion of the Parni, led by Arsaces, into Parthia; beginnings of the Parthian state

P.S. A few months ago, when this text had been already finished, University of California Press published a new Frank Holt's book ("Thundering Zeus. The Making of Hellenistic Bactria", 1999), dealing with some pivotal questions of the beginning of the Diodotids' kingdom. Author presents completely new ideas about mintage of the first rulers of Bactria. The new attribution of coins leads to new conclusions concerning history and chronology. According to Holt, it was Diodotus II who first put the royal title on his coins. Holt states that coins bearing the portrait of Diodotus I and the legend BASILEOS DIODOTOU were made in his son's mint as commemorative specimens. Accepting Holt's point of view one has to take under consideration consequences which it causes for the chronology of the Bactrian independence. Unfortunately due to lack of time it was impossible to take this new theory into account in this article.

Translated by BRUCE MAC QUEEN

STANISŁAW KALITA

Monety Diodotosa baktryjskiego a problem datowania secesji Baktrii

Spór wokół problemu chronologii początków królestwa Greków baktryjskich toczy się od dawna pomiędzy zwolennikami datowania „wysokiego” – 250 r. (dawniej 256) przed Chr., i „niskiego” – 239 r. przed Chr.

Badacze optujący za pierwszym rozwiązaniem powołują się przede wszystkim na świadectwa numizmatyczne. Monety emitowane przez seleukidzkiego namiestnika Baktrii Diodotosa, który następnie ogłosił się królem, nosiły portret Antiocha II (zmarłego w 246 r.). Powiązanie tego faktu z informacjami zawartymi w tekście rzymskiego historyka Marka Junianusa Justynusa, łączącego wydarzenie z połowy III wieku przed Chr. w środkowej Azji z datą kalendarza rzymskiego, pozwala na datowanie secesji Diodotosa na rok 250 przed Chr. Trzeba przy tym zauważyć, iż niejasny tekst Justynusa, zawierający na pierwszy rzut oka pewne wewnętrzne sprzeczności nie jest traktowany jako „materiał dowodowy” podstawowego znaczenia.

Zwolennicy „niskiego” datowania początków państwa greko-baktryjskiego przeciwnie, skupiają się na interpretacji tekstu Justynusa. Inaczej odczytując ten, dość zawiły, antyczny przekaz można dojść do wniosku, że wypowiedzenie posłuszeństwa Seleukidom przez Diodotosa nastąpiło w czasie trwania tzw. „wojny braterskiej” mię-

dzy Seleukosem II a jego bratem Antiochem Hieraksem (239–236 r. przed Chr.). Data kalendarza rzymskiego podana przez autora traktowana jest jako efekt jego pomyłki. Fakt występowania na monetach Diodotosa portretu Antiocha II i brak wizerunku Seleukosa II traktowany jest w tym wypadku jako element mniej istotny, nie posiadający wielkiego znaczenia dla ustalenia precyzyjnej chronologii wydarzeń.

Okazuje się jednak, że istnieje możliwość pogodzenia wniosków płynących z analizy numizmatów i tekstu Justynusa i wzmocnienie stanowiska zwolenników „wysokiego” datowania secesji Baktirii. Wymaga to nieco innego spojrzenia na tekst, w którym inaczej należy zrozumieć ustrukturuwanie zdarzeń i odpowiadających im dat. Zwrot *eodem tempore* („w tym samym czasie”) oznaczający moment buntu Diodotosa można połączyć nie z latami „wojny braterskiej” lecz z lekceważoną dotąd datą kalendarza rzymskiego. Do tej pory „eodem tempore” rozumiano jako odniesienie do lat 239–236. Dla zwolenników „niskiego” datowania, odrzucających datę konsularną, było to precyzyjne odniesienie chronologiczne, dla badaczy opowiadających się za datowaniem „wysokim”, wręcz odwrotnie. Przyjmując nową interpretację tekstu rzymskiego autora możemy uznać, iż świadectwo monet, które łączą Diodotosa z czasami Antiocha II i przekaz antycznego historyka nie pozostają w sprzeczności. Tym samym datowanie początków istnienia królestwa Greków baktryjskich na rok 250 przed Chr. znajduje oparcie w dwóch rodzajach źródeł i staje się w ten sposób bardziej prawdopodobne niż datowanie „niskie” (239 przed Chr.) wspierane tylko dyskusyjną analizą tekstu Justynusa.