

New research on the Bactrian tax-receipt

by Jens Jakobsson and Simon Glenn¹

Introduction

Hellenistic Bactria became independent from the Seleucid Empire in the mid-3rd century BC². Later, during his *anabasis* in 208-206 BC, Antiochos the Great tried to reconquer the former province (Polybios, *Histories* 10.49 and 11.34). After a long siege of Bactra, the war ended with a treaty: Bactria's ruler Euthydemos I was recognised by the Seleucids in exchange for a tribute, and Polybios also says that a marriage alliance was forged between a Seleucid princess and Euthydemos' son, the future ruler Demetrios I.³ Unlike much of Greco-Bactrian history, for which coins are often the only source, this is a short period in which literary evidence provides some illumination. Demetrios (perhaps 195-185 BC) went on to make conquests in India, but we only have numismatic evidence for the following period. Demetrios was apparently succeeded by his young heir, Euthydemos II, but it seems that he disappeared after only a few years, and several kings quickly emerged: Pantaleon and his successor Agathocles Dikaios, Antimachos I Theos, and Apollodotos I Soter - the latter ruling only in India.⁴ Even though Agathocles and Antimachos I issued commemorative coins for earlier rulers, we have no certain genealogic information for either of these kings.

In 1994, R.C. Senior presented a small document, written in Greek on leather, to the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.⁵ The item, measuring 14 cm by 6.25 cm, was identified as a tax receipt and was published twice in the same year by two different groups of scholars: Paul Bernard and Claude Rabin in one article, and John Rea, Senior himself, and Adrian Hollis in another.⁶ The near simultaneous publication meant that the two articles were not able to take into account each other's conclusions. Both papers suggest readings of the text, which for much of the document is quite legible, although there are a number of areas of uncertainty. The receipt consists of seven lines of text, and seems to have been detached from a larger document in antiquity, perhaps fulfilling a similar role to that of a modern cheque stub.⁷ The use of leather for documents in the Hellenistic Far East seems to be attested in Strabo (15.1.73).⁸ Two other documents written in Greek on the same material and held in a private

¹ The thesis (1b and 2) of this paper was written by Jakobsson, while the technical research on the tax-receipt (1a) was undertaken by Dr. Glenn.

² For a more general introduction to Graeco-Bactrian history and studies, see for instance Mairs (2014).

³ It is unknown whether this marriage took place, but the appearance of a queen Laodike (a royal name used exclusively by the Seleucids and dynasties intermarried with them) on coins associated with Eukratides I, is an indication that some Bactrian royal families had Seleucid connections. See Jakobsson (2014), p.25, n.50, for a recent treatment of this evidence.

⁴ Chronology based on Bopearachchi (1991). These kings can only be dated approximately. Numismatic evidence suggests that their reigns began after Demetrios I, but before Eukratides I, whose ascension can be dated to c.170-165 BC with some certainty, and that the relative order given above is correct. Apollodotos I is given as an early Indo-Greek king by Pompeius Trogus, *Prologus* 41 (recorded by Justin). Epicleses are presented for kings who used such on their lifetime coinage.

⁵ Accession number EA1994.79: <http://jameelcentre.ashmolean.org/object/EA1994.79>

⁶ Bernard and Rabin (1994); Rea, Senior, and Hollis (1994).*

⁷ Bernard and Rabin (1994), p. 267.

⁸ Hollis (1996).

collection have also come to light more recently.⁹ Our document has eight small, equally-spaced perforations along its bottom edge, which have previously been identified as holes left by nails holding the material to a wooden frame, used in the manufacturing process to dry out the skin.¹⁰ Rea, on the other hand, suggested that the holes were the result of the document being stitched to another, or perhaps as a method of sealing.¹¹ Similar perforations are found in format 1a of the legal and economic Bactrian documents dated to the 4th to 8th centuries AD, where they were also interpreted as evidence that the documents were sealed.¹² It seems likely that the Hellenistic tax receipt was sealed at some point, or attached to a larger document, perhaps a more expansive contract.

The receipt is dated in year 4 of ‘the kingship (βασιλευόντων) of Antimachos (I) Theos and Eumenes and Antimachos’. The identity of Eumenes will be discussed below; it has previously been assumed that he was an older son of Antimachos I Theos, who never appeared on coins. The second Antimachos, undoubtedly a son of the first, was likely identical to the Antimachos II Nikephoros who issued coins in India, though probably at a somewhat later time¹³.

The present paper returns to this tax-receipt, for two purposes:

- 1) To further analyse a lacuna on lines 1-2, using a newly taken infrared photograph; the correct reading of the final line is also studied.
- 2) A possible connection between Eumenes and Eumenes II of Pergamon, due to the discovery of an overlooked ancient source.

1a Technical analysis of the tax-receipt

We reproduce here the reconstruction of the entire receipt proposed by Rea:

βασιλευόντων θεοῦ Ἀντιμάχου καὶ Εὐμένους καὶ Ἀντιμάχο[υ
ου, ἔτους δ, μηνὸς Ὀλώϊου, ἐν Ἀσαγγόρνοις, νομοφυ-
 λακοῦντος .. ου. ἔχει Μηνόδοτος λογευτής, συμπαρόντων
 .εου τοῦ συναπεσταλμένου ὑπὸ Δημόνακτος [...] τοῦ γενομένου[υ
μεως καὶ Σίμου τοῦ διὰ Διοδώρου τοῦ ἐπὶ τῶν προσόδων
π.....ου τοῦ Δατάου ἐξ ἱερειῶν τρα-
τῇ ὥνῃ τὰ καθήκοντα.

‘In the reign of God Antimachus and Eumenes and Antimachus ... year 4, month of Olōus, in Asangorna (?), when NN was guardian of the law. Menodotus, tax-gatherer, in the presence of NN, who was sent out likewise by Demonax the former ..., and of Simus (?), who was ... by agency of

⁹ Clarysse and Thompson (2007). For a recent collection of Greek texts from the region see Rougemont (2012). Just like the tax-receipt, this document mentions a king Antimachos, but without an epiclesis.

¹⁰ Bernard and Rapin (1994), p. 261-263.

¹¹ Rea, Senior and Hollis (1994), p. 262.

¹² Sims-Williams (2000), p. 10.

¹³ Rea, Senior and Hollis (1994), p.270-271, argues that the tax-receipt proves that the two Antimachi were contemporary rulers. However, if he was joint-king with his father, the second Antimachos may not have been represented on coins yet. Several Seleucid joint-kings never appeared on coins (for instance Seleukos son of Antiochos I, and Antiochos son of Antiochos III, who both predeceased their fathers). See Jakobsson (2009), pp.8-9, for a discussion about a later dating of the Indian coins of Antimachos II to c.155-150 BC.

Diodorus, controller of revenues, acknowledges receipt from (?) NN the son(?) of Dataes(?), ... of the payments due in respect of the purchase ...'

The most significant difference between the readings of Rea and Bernard-Rapin is that of the final line (7). Indeed, in a later article, Rapin accepted the first six lines of Rea's reading, but insisted on his own version of the final line.¹⁴ Rapin's reconstruction is:

... ωι ν . . . στατήρων κ' τὰ καθήκοντα

Such a final line clarifies the value of the amount due at 20 staters and is confirmed as the correct reading by the new IR imaging discussed below.¹⁵ One of the more recent leather documents from Hellenistic Bactria also mentions a specific value, although in that case as '100 drachmas of coined silver'.¹⁶ Other than this one confirmation of the proposed readings the new evidence confirms the reading suggested by Rea.

In the original paper, Rea discusses the lacuna of lines 1-2: 'In theory the unread passage could contain the name of a fourth king, but και seems an equally unlikely reading of the beginning of it.'¹⁷ He continues later in the article:

[Lines] 1-2 καὶ Ἀντιμάχο[υ] ου. This makes clear that there was a second king of this dynasty called Antimachus. It is still argued whether the coins inscribed βασιλέως Νικηφόρου Ἀντιμάχου were issued by θεὸς Ἀντίμαχος or not. Here we would perhaps like to read some version of Νικηφόρου, even though this passage comes after the name. However, the letter before -ου has a descender more upright than the descender of the rho of this hand, which usually slopes back downwards to the left. Tau would seem most suitable, but perhaps iota is possible. At the beginning of the line there are remains of three or four letters which it would be possible to match against a correct guess, but which it is impossible for the moment to read with an objective eye. All efforts to match them with Νικο- or Νεικο- have proved fruitless. Nor do they fit καί, to suit the possibility that the royal college had a fourth member.¹⁸

The authors agree with Rea's analysis, adding only that even though the word και¹⁹ did not appear on line 2, it could have been written at the end of line 1 - the upper right corner has been torn off.

While the tax receipt was removed from display for remounting the opportunity was taken to undertake some renewed analysis at the Ashmolean Museum, the main focus of which was an attempt to recover any parts of the previously illegible sections of the text, with a particular interest in the dating formula of the first two lines. The authors are very grateful to Alexandra Greathead, Senior Paper Conservator at the Ashmolean for her work with the object and for the new images she

¹⁴ Rapin (1996), p. 459.

¹⁵ The term 'staters' should not be taken as a direct reference to gold coins now given that denomination. It is more likely merely a unit of account.

¹⁶ Clarysse and Thompson (2007), p. 276.

¹⁷ Rea, Senior, and Hollis (1994), p. 261.

¹⁸ *ibid.* p. 264.

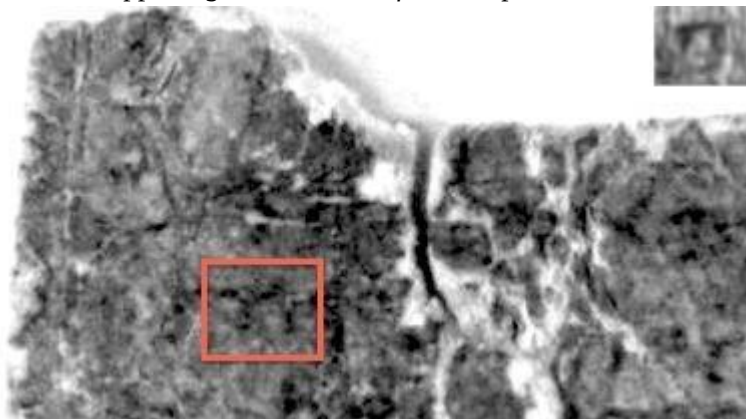
¹⁹ This paper represents the text with lower case Greek letters, as in the original papers, except when explicitly discussing the sizes and shapes of the (upper case) Greek letters on the parchment.

produced, which are discussed below. Both infrared and ultraviolet digital images were taken, with the former producing the best results given the likely carbon-based formulation of the ancient ink.²⁰ The technique of reflected infrared digital photography, the results of which are presented here, is well-developed and often used to establish differences in composition in works of art or other written documents. By capturing reflections of infrared light it can highlight or clarify traces of the writing medium otherwise invisible.²¹

Ill 1. The tax-receipt, IR 850 filter photograph.



Ill 2. Beginning of line 2 from beginning to end of lacuna, magnified to c. 4:1. The letter Π within rectangle, preserved except for parts of the outlying right horizontal edge. The contrast has been enhanced. Upper right corner: a Π from the penultimate line, as reference.



²⁰ Different analytical techniques may provide a clearer view of the document, but it is unlikely that these will be undertaken in their current formats, given the risk that increased light and heat involved cause damage to the object.

²¹ For a discussion of the various methods of infrared digital imaging, see Warda and Frey (2011).

1b The case for Apollodotos as joint-king

The sequence and spacing of letters at the beginning of line 2 is thus, from left to right (see *Ill* 2):

A nearly complete **Π** near the beginning of the text.

Various darker portions that cannot be deciphered, which may be remnants of other letters, but this cannot be said with any certainty. They may just be smears or effects of the tear that goes through this region.

A stroke suggesting a **T** at the end of the lacuna, as observed by Rea, directly followed by **οΥ**.

These remnants could be reconstructed as traces of the name **ΑΠΟΛΛΟΔΟΤΟΥ**²² (with a lost **καὶ** in the lost upper right corner), though alternative words could of course also fit. There are, however, contextual indications: the preceding sentence is a king list, and Apollodotos was a contemporary Greek king in the region. It is noteworthy that the dating formula is already unique; there are no references to Hellenistic eras dated in the reign of three kings²³, and the addition of a fourth would only make the design more ostentatious. The unique dating is not surprising for a document from the period after Demetrios I, which saw intense experimentation with Bactrian royal propaganda. This is apparent from the commemorative coins, the addition of royal epicleses to coins, and from the introduction of bilingual coins in India, often implementing local designs (such as square coins) and symbols (such as Indian deities, elephants and bulls).

This paper is deliberately brief on reconstructions of the relationships between the Bactrian kings; however, the early Indo-Greek kingdom must have depended on migrants from Bactria as a source of soldiers, officials and colonists, just as the Diadochi had once relied on Greeks and Macedonians as settlers in their new states. The Diadochi were long unwilling to sever the ties to Macedonia formally, and recognised the Argead puppet dynasty there until its end in 309 BC (cf note 23); similarly Apollodotos I would likely have been reluctant to sever the ties to the homeland entirely. He may have nominally accepted a subjugate status to Bactrian kings such as Antimachos I, in order to keep the migration routes across the Hindu Kush open.

There exists an indication of this: Apollodotos I issued rare Attic tetradrachms (Bopearachchi, 1991, Apollodote I, Series 1), for circulation north of the Hindu Kush.²⁴ Their exquisite portraits make them clearly superior to any other Indo-Greek coins issued at this early time (portraits did not even appear until the reign of Menander I), and the monogram, no 44 (Bopearachchi, 1991), which also appeared on Attic coins of Antimachos I and Eukratides I, was never used on Apollodotos' Indian coinage. Despite the fact that the Indian and Attic series have nothing in common, it is nevertheless widely

²² The original suggestion that the lacuna may have contained the name Apollodotos was made by Mark Passahl.

²³ Cuneiform inscriptions, from the turbulent period after Seleukos I had driven Antigonos Monophthalmos out of Babylonia in 311 BC, sometimes date by two names. For instance *The Diadochi Chronicle* (BCHP 3; a.k.a. ABC 10, Chronicle 10) states that 'Year 7 of Antigonos the general you will from now on count as year 6 of Alexander, son of Alexander and Seleucus the general. Month Simanu (31 May – 29 June 311)'. Here, the year is dated by the (nominal) king and his general. (Originally, Smith (1925), copy plates xv – xvii; new interpretation by professor B. van der Spek.) Possibly, this is somewhat similar to the Bactrian dating formula.

²⁴ Find spots for every coin are not known, but monolingual coins issued on the Attic standard never circulated in India. One specimen appeared in the Ai Khanoum excavated hoard I. (Petinot-Biehler, 1975). The commissioner for Triton XIII (see *Ill* 3) knew about 'less than ten specimens' from two obverse and two reverse dies (in 2010).

agreed they were issued by the same king.²⁵ It seems more likely than not that these Attic tetradrachms were even minted in Bactria, though apparently a special, highly qualified engraver was engaged: cf *Ill* 3 with the different style on the regular Antimachos tetradrachm (*Ill* 4). What is interesting is that Apollodotos I has omitted his epiclesis 'Soter', which appeared on all his Indian coinage. On the tax-receipt, the use of an epiclesis distinguished Antimachos I Theos above his joint regents. So this omission may have been a condition that Apollodotos had to accept, in exchange for having a token coinage allowed to circulate in Bactria - and thus being recognised as a *joint king*, in a wide sense of that word.²⁶ The tetradrachms might have been related to payments to Bactrians, for instance soldiers.

Taking all this into consideration, the author finds it likely, if not proved definitely, that the name of Apollodotos really was added as the last in rank among the joint rulers of Antimachos Theos.



²⁵ For instance Narain (1984/2003), p. 269, and Senior (2006), p.xxv, accepted the connection. These Attic tetradrachms were issued before the destruction of Ai Khanoum (see previous note), which is often dated to around the death of Eukratides I, in the 140s BC. They were not accompanied by smaller denominations: Eukratides and earlier Bactrian kings usually issued drachms, obols, and bronzes. Contrariwise, later Indo-Greek kings (for instance Menander I) issued small series of tetradrachms that circulated in Bactria.

The Indian coins of Pantaleon and Agathokles have almost nothing in common with their Bactrian series - the Indian coins lack epicleses, portraits and Greek monograms, were rectangular and issued on different weight standards, and contained a set of predominantly Indian symbols (the only overlap is that both Bactrian and Indian series display a lion on some bronzes). Apparently, the earliest Indo-Greek coins were issued by a different administration, who were inspired by indigenous types (such as Karshapana and punch-marked coins). Typical Hellenistic motifs and techniques were introduced only gradually, and there would be nothing unexpected with a similar lack of overlaps for their contemporary Apollodotos I.

With this in mind, it has seemed unlikely to postulate the existence of an elderly Bactrian king Apollodotos, issuing an atypical coinage, as a contemporary or near contemporary of the Indian Apollodotos I. See Bopearachchi, (1991) for coin types.

²⁶ *Joint king*, as it is used here, is not a translation of a formal institution in any Hellenistic state; it is merely a modern designation for people who were called kings, but were so alongside a more senior king. The most typical joint king was of course the king's son, but that is hardly the case here - Apollodotos I is portrayed as a mature man.

Ill 3. Attic tetradrachm of Apollodotos I: portrait in kausia / Athena Nikephoros. Legend without epiclesis. Monogram 44. Courtesy of CNGcoins.com. Triton XIII, Lot: 255.



Ill 4. A tetradrachm of Antimachos I Theos: portrait in kausia / Poseidon. Legend with epiclesis. Monogram 44. Courtesy of CNGcoins.com: 803086, SNG ANS 274.

2. The identity of king Eumenes

As mentioned, the tax-receipt also cites an otherwise unattested king Eumenes. The distance to Bactria has made it uncomfortable to identify him with the only known contemporary ruler of that name, king Eumenes II of Pergamon (197-159 BC). Eumenes II helped the Romans defeat Antiochus the Great at the battle of Magnesia in 190 BC, and in the peace of Apamea two years later, where the Seleucid Empire was forced to pay a massive war indemnity, Rome awarded the former Seleucid territories in Asia Minor to Pergamon. The peace conditions were recorded by Greco-Roman sources (cf. Polybios, *Histories* 21.42).

However, the 1st Book of Maccabees, 8.6-8.9, records how Eumenes II was given Seleucid lands not only in 'Lydia' (i.e. western Asia Minor), but also in 'Media' and 'India'! Such claims could be discarded as fictional, or a misunderstanding²⁷, but the coincidence of a king Eumenes – the only Bactrian ruler not known from coins – being mentioned in Bactria shortly after, might justify a more in-depth analysis of whether this could refer to existing nominal claims in the treaty.

Official Hellenistic propaganda with hyperbolic claims of eastern conquests is known elsewhere.²⁸

²⁷ The names are found in all manuscripts, but Cotton (1832) p.90, discusses how Grotius suggested an amendment to *Mysia* and *Ionia*.

²⁸ For instance, the Adoulis inscription (OGIS 54), by Ptolemy III from c.245 BC, refers to Ptolemaic conquests of all lands 'up to Bactria' in the 3rd Syrian War (in reality, Ptolemy's campaign probably reached as far east as Babylon).

As a source, 1st Maccabees was centered on the creation of the Hasmonean kingdom; its authors had access to archives in Jerusalem, diplomatic communications and Seleucid official edicts.²⁹ However, the humiliations of Apamea are unlikely to have been officially communicated by the Seleucids, which perhaps makes the Maccabean account less credible.

It is well-known that when the Romans defeated their enemies, their alliances were dissolved and their foreign policy was forced to fit the Romans – Carthage was for instance forced to contribute to the war against Antiochus the Great (Appian, *Syriake*, 5.22). The lands in Media might possibly refer to the submission of rulers of Iranian origin - the Seleucid vassal dynasties of Pontus and Cappadocia descended from Achaemenid satraps. So perhaps the lands that Eumenes II received in ‘Media’ refers to how Cappadocia and Pontus, possibly also the vassal kingdom Media Atropatene, were forced to become vassals of Rome or Pergamon instead of the Seleucid Empire. This process is documented by Greek authors.³⁰

As for ‘India’³¹, Antiochos had as mentioned received a tribute from Euthydemus I, and allegedly forged a marriage alliance. This likely suggests that, from a Seleucid perspective at least, Bactria was incorporated into the Seleucid vassal network.³² Antiochos also received a further tribute of elephants from Subhagasena, a ruler in India proper.

If the passage in 1.Macc. is interpreted as above, Rome may have forced Antiochos to pledge to surrender his pretences in the east - such as they were - and have them nominally bestowed on Eumenes II. This would apparently have been only an empty gesture of humiliation, which perhaps was why only 1 Macc interpreted it as relevant to record. It is a possible reconstruction, but by no means proven.

Even if this were correct, it does not mean that the joint-regent must be identified with Eumenes II. The passage would only provide a hypothetical context for why Eumenes II may have been relevant at all to a king in Bactria: his inclusion may have been a statement from Antimachos I that the Seleucid hegemony had ended. Such a move would perhaps have been in opposition not so much to the now distant Seleucids themselves, but to competing rulers who were still related to, or associated with, the Seleucids as a result of the marriage alliance.

The alternative, obviously less complicated, would be that Eumenes was an older son of Antimachos I. However, this alternative is not entirely unproblematic either, as Hellenistic kings usually promoted only *one* son as their joint king. The name Eumenes seems to have been quite unusual among Greeks living east of the Mediterranean in Hellenistic times³³, though this cannot be used to exclude that it

²⁹ Kosmin (2014), p.10.

³⁰ Polybios, *Histories* 21.44. mentions how Cappadocia became a Roman ally. Diodoros Sikulos, *Library of History* 29.24.1. confirms that Seleukos IV was no longer allowed to support the former Seleucid ally of Pontus. Sikulos, 31.27, also relates how the Senate awarded kingship over Media to Timarchos, a Seleucid secessionist, in 161 BC, which possibly indicates that the Senate no longer regarded Media as a part of the Seleucid Empire.

³¹ In ancient times, India was a vague geographic term; it would not be surprising if the term also included the Graeco-Bactrian domains, with their Indian provinces.

³² For instance Sherwin-White, Kuhrt (1993), p.199, and Strootman (2017), p.186. Both stress that the treaty was a confirmation of Seleucid suzerainty. Marriage alliances were a standard move to establish Seleucid relations to vassal dynasties, but the distance to Bactria, and the lack of sources, make any ideas about the actual Seleucid influence conjectural.

³³ The name is not known elsewhere in the (very small) known Bactrian name corpus, but more important is the list of all people known to have lived in the Seleucid Empire, compiled by Grainger (1997). Grainger’s list of

was not in use in Bactria (and a son of Antimachos could even have been named in honour of the Pergamene king).

In any case, the inclusion of joint rulers - if the dating was even the design of Antimachos Theos' own court - could, just like his commemorative coins and his divine epithet, be interpreted as an attempt to convey an impression of stability and legitimacy. The dating formula on the tax-receipt remains unique, and though it also remains enigmatic, the arrangement should reflect the complicated political situation in which Antimachos I Theos acted.

Acknowledgements

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Seleucid subjects (and some officials) with what resembles Greek male names is roughly approximated to c. 2500 people - though this number would include a number of more or less Hellenised no-Greek names, and several incomplete entries. (The many Babylonian names, and names with known other ethnic connotations, are of course excluded.)

Grainger only lists a single Eumenes, an official of Antiochos IV (p.89). However, Grainger also mentions a Eumenes, the father of a Greek living in Susa in the 3rd century BC (p.306), and a third Eumenes, the son of a Greek couple who had moved from Seleukia-on-the-Tigris to Miletos (p.469).

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