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Mac Dowall, David W.

## The Early Indo-Greek Currency of Arachosia.

in: Franke-Vogt, Ute – Weisshaar, H.-J (Hrsg.), South Asian archaeology 2003: proceedings of the Seventeenth International Conference of the European Association of South Asian Archaeologists, 7–11 July 2003, Bonn 241–245.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.34780/mvc3-3u6b>

**Herausgebende Institution / Publisher:**

Deutsches Archäologisches Institut

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Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Zentrale, Podbielskiallee 69–71, 14195 Berlin, Tel: +49 30 187711-0

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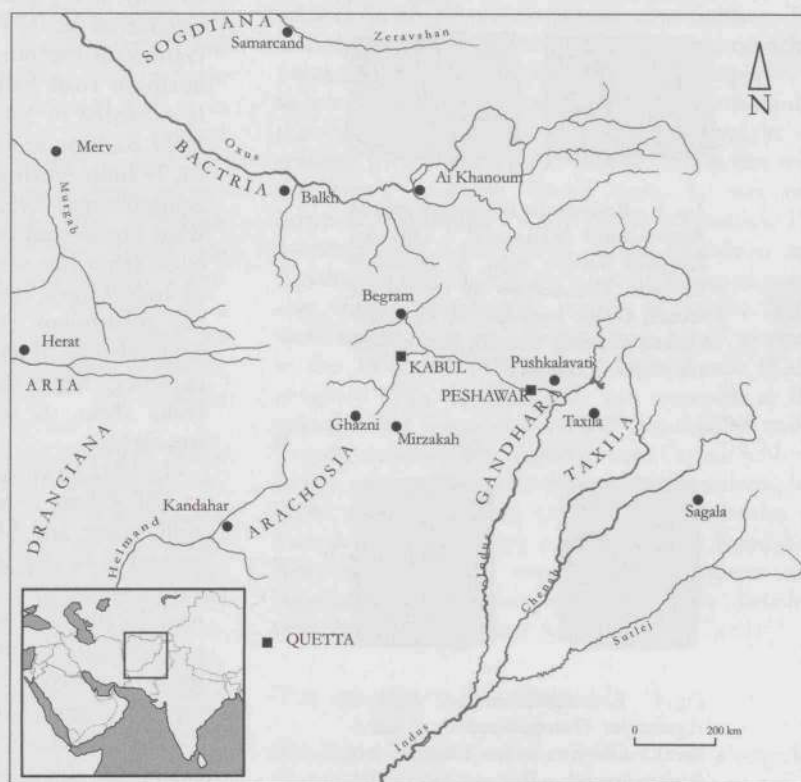
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D. W. Mac Dowall

## The Early Indo-Greek Currency of Arachosia

Fig. 1. Map of the Area, with sites.



Arachosia was the name of the ancient province now represented by south-eastern Afghanistan. It was bounded on the north by the Paropamisadae (the area round Kabul) and on the west by Drangiana (modern Seistan, fig. 1). It is the corridor which provides easy access between the Iranian plateau on the west and the Indian subcontinent on the east. At Kandahar the road forks. One road continues east to Quetta and the Indus valley. The other turns north north-east to Kabul and Begram. Alexander left a garrison of 4,600 troops in this strategic location. Seleucus subsequently ceded Arachosia with his other eastern provinces of Gandhara and the Paropamisadae to Chandragupta Maurya, c. 305 BC. About a century later it was captured for the Graeco-Bactrian king Euthydemus, "the greatest of kings", by his

son the remarkable Demetrius, "winner of great victories", as they are termed in a recently discovered Greek inscription on an altar dedicated to Hestia (Bernard/Pinault/Rougemont 2004, 333–356).

### EXCAVATIONS AT OLD KANDAHAR

The British Institute in Afghanistan conducted four seasons of excavations at Old Kandahar (Shahr-i-Kuhna) between 1975 and 1978. These revealed an early Hellenistic settlement, itself on the site of a massive Achaemenid fortress, from which the pottery in the first two phases corresponds with that of phases VI and VII at Mundigak (Helms 1997, 60–62). Although it was not possible to complete the excavations, it now seems reason-



Fig. 2. Round copper coin of Antimachus I (Bactria or Drangiana). – Obverse: Elephant walking right, no legend. – Reverse: Nike standing, Greek legend. – 7.35 g (Ashmolean Museum, Oxford; photographs copyright of author).



Fig. 3. Rectangular tin-bronze coin of Antimachus I (Arachosia). – Obverse: Elephant walking right, no legend. – Reverse: Thunderbolt in rectangular incuse, Greek legend. – 9.13 g (Ashmolean Museum, Oxford; photographs copyright of author).



Fig. 4. Rectangular copper coin of Agathocles (Paropamisadae or Gandhara). – Obverse: Indian Yakshi to left, Brahmi legend. – Reverse: Lion standing to right in rectangular incuse, Greek legend. – 10.32 g (Ashmolean Museum, Oxford; photographs copyright of author).

ably certain that the site was Alexandria in Arachosia (Fraser 1996, 132–140). The pre-Islamic coins found during the excavations (Mac Dowall 1978, 50–51; Helms 1997, 95–99) include a copper coin of Alexander the Great, another of the Seleucid king Antiochus III, a copper Negama (guild) coin of post-Mauryan Taxila, two round coppers of Euthydemus I, one square bilingual copper of Eucratides and a debased bilingual Indian tetradrachm of Hermaeus. There is a small group of five silver tetradrachms from the time of the Indo-Scythic invasion – one Hippostratus, one Spalyrisis with Azes, and three Azes I. Surpris-

ingly, there are no copper coins of the Kushan dynasty that are so numerous at Begram, Ghazni and Taxila. The copper currency of the second century AD is instead provided by the copper tetradrachms of the later Indo-Parthian coins of the Nike type (Mac Dowall 1965, 137–148) – with one Gondophares II, one Orthagnes and three Pacores. The coins cover the dynasties in power at Kandahar, but not in sufficient numbers to throw further light on the detailed succession of rulers.

#### THE TWO DEPOSITS FOUND AT MIR ZAKAH

In May 1947, a large deposit of early coins was discovered at Mir Zakah, 53 km north east of Gardez in the north of Arachosia. It lies on the northern road from Ghazni to the Indus valley. It consisted of 5,837 silver Indian punch-marked, 2,757 Bactrian and Indo-Greek, 4,390 Indo-Scythian, 29 Indo-Parthian and 37 Kushan coins. (Curiel/Schlumberger 1953, 65–91). It is far from clear what occasioned the deposit, which seems to have come from two sacred basins. The limited number of Indo-Greek copper coins, like those found in the subsequent excavations at the site (Curiel/Schlumberger 1953, 96–99) seem to reflect the local currency, while the much more numerous silver coins seem to represent the booty of looted treasuries.

In 1992 an enormous second deposit was found at Mir Zakah, consisting of two or three tons of gold, silver and bronze coins, one of the largest ancient coin deposits ever attested (Bopearachchi 1994, 4–8). More than 400 coins from this find, now in the collection of Aman ur Rahman (Bopearachchi/ur Rahman 1995, 227–228) include many hitherto unreported examples of monograms and types and give good evidence of provenance for specific coins, but having been selected by a knowledgeable collector, they can provide no statistical data for areas of circulation.

#### OTHER COIN FINDS FROM KANDAHAR

The coins in the collection of the local museums at Kandahar (Mac Dowall/Ibrahim 1978, 67–78; Ramachandran/Sharma 1946) were said to have been found in Kandahar and its neighbourhood, but no specific locations were recorded. As it contains some 108 Kushan copper coins – a series that does not seem to have circulated at Kandahar in antiquity, but is commonly found at Begram, Kabul and Ghazni, we must regard the coins in the museum as local in a general way, but not specifically local to Kandahar, and so treat this evidence with caution.

Cunningham (1884, 144) made use of notes about the comparative rarity of coins and the localities from which they were obtained that he

obtained from two collectors, Colonel Stacey who commanded a regiment at Kandahar in 1839–1841 and Captain Hutton who was employed in the Commissariat Department in Kandahar and Seistan during the same period. On Colonel Stacey's death, his collection was listed (Thomas 1858, 251–260) before it was acquired by the Asiatic Society of Bengal. Captain Hutton's collection was purchased by Cunningham himself. Cunningham reports that coppers of Euthydemus were found in about equal numbers in Seistan, Kandahar and throughout the Kabul valley. They were very common in Seistan and Kandahar. The single round copper coin of Bactrian format of Antimachus I (with the elephant obverse/victory reverse, fig. 2) was procured in Seistan. Square bilingual coppers of Eucratides are found at Kandahar, and have a wide distribution in Bactria at Ai Khanoum and in the Paropamisadae at Begram as well as in Arachosia at Mir Zakah and Kandahar. In marked contrast, coins of Menander, described by Cunningham as "more numerous than those of any other Greek prince of the east" and of which Masson (1836, 537–547) found 153 at Begram, are conspicuous by their absence at Kandahar. Cunningham reports that Col. Stacey did not find a single coin of Menander at Kandahar, where he lived for two years, but only got them when he reached Kabul. Capt. Hutton got "not a single specimen from Kandahar or Seistan".

The find of Attic silver tetradrachms of Antimachus I alongside an aureus of Eucratides from Kandahar (Scerrato 1958, 4–6 fn. 10) reinforces the evidence from Mir Zakah that Antimachus I Theos was one of the Greek kings involved in Arachosia in the civil war at the time of the accession of Eucratides I. Antimachus Theos issued rare, unusual tin-bronze coins with a pronounced reverse incuse of rectangular/Indian shape, but with a legend in Greek only and not any Indian script (fig. 3). Five examples of the larger denomination (c. 10–12 g) are known – all without any known provenance. But of the eleven examples of the smaller denomination (c. 2.5–3 g), five examples come from Mir Zakah I, and two come from Mir Zakah II. In fact, Antimachus seems to have played a pivotal role in the civil war at the time of Eucratides' accession.

#### THE USE OF TIN-BRONZE

Earlier uncertainty whether these rectangular coins should be attributed to Antimachus I Theos or the later Antimachus II Nikephorus has been resolved by the recent publication of clearer, better preserved specimens (MacDonald/Senior 1997, 21–26). Speculations about the metal in which they were struck (Audouin/Bernard 1974, 27–28) have been resolved by a series of metallic analyses (Barrandon/Nicolet-Pierre 1989, 64–65). In the contemporary Hellenistic world aes coinage was

normally struck in tin-bronze containing between 4 and 7% tin (Caley 1939, 91–95). But the small change for the Greek kings in Bactria was struck in virtually pure copper, as were the contemporary rectangular coinages in India, including the rectangular bilingual (Greek/Brahmi) incuse coins of the early Indo-Greek kings Pantaleon and Agathocles (fig. 4). The rectangular tin bronze coins of Antimachus Theos have the name of the king in Greek only and are struck with an exceptionally high tin content – slightly more than 20%. Tin was substantially more valuable than copper. In the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC at Athens, it cost 230 drachmae per talent whereas copper cost 35 drachmae (Le Rider 1994, 589–590). During the Hellenistic period, the relative price of tin to copper rose further. The introduction of tin bronze coinage by Antimachus I was not accidental. It was a deliberate experiment to introduce two new denominations worth double the value of copper coins of the same weight – a coinage with a rectangular Indian format but with the king's name in Greek only. It was not, however, continued by any of his successors. The contemporary Indo-Greek kings Pantaleon and Agathocles struck their rectangular bilingual coins, also with a pronounced incuse, in copper. They were found with so-called "Taxila local" coppers in the 1879 and 1884 hoards from Taxila (Cunningham 1891, 65–66). They are common at Begram, where Masson found 43 Agathocles and 7 Pantaleon, and at Mir Zakah, where Curiel/Schlumberger report 10 Agathocles and 19 Pantaleon, but there were no oblong coppers of Agathocles or Pantaleon in the Stacey collection from Kandahar. Rectangular incuse coppers of Pantaleon and Agathocles clearly have a more easterly distribution from Begram and Gandhara to Taxila.

#### THE PERIOD OF EUCRATIDES I

We know from Justin's *Epitome of Pompeius Trogus* XLI. 6 that Eucratides rose to power in Bactria about the same time as Mithridates I secured power in Parthia, about 170 BC. During his reign he assumed the title "Megas", some time before 162 BC, the date of the revolt of Timarchus satrap of Babylon, who copied the coin types and titulature of Eucratides in that year (Bellinger 1945, 37–40). He seems to have ruled until c. 145 BC, as a year date of 24 has been found on a ceramic pot in the destruction level of the treasury at Ai Khanoum (Bernard 1995, 99). As we have seen, square bilingual coppers of Eucratides from the second period of his reign are found in significant numbers in Bactria, the Paropamisadae and Arachosia. Square bilingual coppers of Apollodotus I are well represented in finds from Begram, Mir Zakah and Kandahar. Coppers of both kings are found together in the 1840 hoard from Charikar (Haughton 1948, 103). They are similar in size, fabric and general appearance and

presumably circulated side by side as the issues of consecutive rulers. But the weight of Apollodotus I coppers generally is slightly higher than that of the comparable Eucratides denomination, and slightly lower than the weight of the more primitive oblong coppers of Agathocles. They seem intended to be successive stages of the same copper denomination in the Paropamisadae and Arachosia.

Antimachus I used the cult title "Theos" on all his silver denominations and on his tin bronze rectangular aes coinage, although not on his Bactrian type round coppers (Bopearachchi 1991, 183–184). In adopting this titulature "god manifest" in his lifetime, he was simply and directly copying the Seleucid king Antiochus IV who assumed the title in his second series of silver tetradrachms c. 173/2 to 169/8 BC (Mørkholm 1968, 68–74). Antimachus I must therefore be dated to this same period when Eucratides rose to power, and we must revise our chronology accordingly.

There can be little doubt that Antimachus I was a contemporary and rival of Agathocles. During the course of his reign, Agathocles added the title "Dikaios" to the titulature on his Bactrian silver coinage (Bopearachchi 1991, 173). These kings were the first two rulers of Bactria and India to use a cult title on their coinage, a practice which became normal with later Greek kings. Each of them also issued a pedigree series of commemorative coins, claiming legitimacy of succession against his rival (Holt 1984, 69–91).

It is sometimes assumed that Eucratides' Indian campaign came at the end of his reign because it was during his return from India that he was murdered. But it was after a victory in India before 162 BC that he adopted the title "Megas" and most of his silver and all his bilingual square copper coinage include that title and belong to that longer second phase of his reign. He must therefore have been involved in at least two campaigns in India. The different pattern of distribution of the copper coins of his contemporaries throws some light on the protagonists in the civil war he faced on his rise to power.

#### THE EARLY INDO-GREEK KINGS OF ARACHOSIA AND THEIR CURRENCY

We can now reconstruct the sequence of the rulers of Kandahar and Arachosia in this period. During the reign of Euthydemus I, Arachosia and the

other provinces that had been ceded to Chandragupta were recaptured by his son Demetrius (Mac Dowall, in press) who was given the title "Rex Indorum", king of the Indians, and eventually succeeded him. About the time of Eucratides' revolt c. 170 BC, Antimachus I became the ruler of Arachosia and Seistan, while his contemporary and rival Agathocles became ruler of the Paropamisadae, Gandhara and Taxila. No doubt each of these three kings also controlled parts of Bactria. Some time before 162 BC Eucratides won a great victory in the east and adopted the title "Megas", a title that had been in abeyance during the Macedonian supremacy but was assumed by Antiochus III from the restoration of his empire in the east (Bevan 1902, 241–244). He seems to have left Apollodotus I in charge of Arachosia, the Paropamisadae, Gandhara and Taxila. Much later, probably on the demise of Apollodotus I, Eucratides incorporated the western Indian territories (Arachosia and the Paropamisadae) under direct Bactrian rule. Meanwhile Antimachus II Nikephorus was able to establish himself further east to be succeeded by Menander. We do not yet know the interpretation of the monograms on the coinage and the locations with which they were connected, but there does seem to be a broad pattern of changing allegiance from time to time which probably holds the key to a more precise attribution of political control. What is clear is that after the murder of Eucratides c. 145 BC, Menander succeeded Eucratides as ruler in the Paropamisadae, but not in Kandahar or Bactria.

Kandahar seems to have retained its Greek language and culture throughout this period. The bilingual Greek/Aramaic Rock inscription discovered in Old Kandahar in 1958 (Schlumberger/Robert/Dupont-Sommer/Benveniste 1958, 1–48) which gives the text of one of the pious proclamations of Asoka, the Greek building inscription from the ruins of Old Kandahar (Schlumberger 1964, 126–140) quoting parts of edicts XII and XIII of Asoka, the inscribed statue base with Greek elegiac couplets found in the 1978 excavations at Old Kandahar (Fraser 1979, 9–21), and the Greek acritic verse inscription of the merchant Sophytes, who restored his family's fortunes in the first century BC (Bernard/Pinault/Rougemont 2004, 227–332), seem to warrant the description of Isidore of Charax in Parthian Stations 19 that Alexandropolis, the metropolis of Arachosia, is Greek, while the land is under the rule of the Parthians.

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