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LAODICE MOTHER OF EUCRATIDES OF BACTRIA

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LAODICE MOTHER OF EUCRATIDES OF BACTRIA

About the year 165 B.C.,¹ the Bactrian king Eucratides I, who had begun his reign up to five years earlier,² added the epithet μέγας to his titulature, probably to mark the enlargement of his kingdom at the expense of the descendants of Euthydemus I.³ In celebration, he struck two coins which are quite out of the ordinary. There was an astonishing twenty-stater piece, the largest gold coin known from antiquity. We can be confident that this was one of the earliest issues of Eucratides to bear the epithet μέγας, since Dr. Osmund Bopearachchi has acutely observed from the unique specimen in Paris⁴ that the die-cutter first of all tried to engrave ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΜΕΓΑΛΟΥ in a straight line above the charging Dioscuri (as had been done previously for ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ on coins with the simple legend ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΕΥΚΡΑΤΙΔΟΥ), but then decided that the letters would be too small and cramped; so he arranged ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΜΕΓΑΛΟΥ in a semi-circle around the top.⁵

The other extraordinary coin struck by Eucratides, probably at the same time, was a silver tetradrachm⁶ commemorating his parents. On the obverse side⁷ we see their conjugate busts with legend ΗΛΙΟΚΛΕΟΥΣ ΚΑΙ ΛΑΟΔΙΚΗΣ, and on the reverse the king himself, helmeted,⁸ with the legend ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ ΜΕΓΑΣ ΕΥΚΡΑΤΙΔΗΣ. Normally, of course, the king's name will appear in the genitive case; here there can be no doubt that we are meant to understand the complete inscription as 'King Eucratides the Great, [son of] Heliocles and Laodice'. An interesting and unexpected contrast on the obverse is that the king's father Heliocles is bare-headed but his mother Laodice wears a diadem; the latter point used sometimes to be questioned but, with the discovery of more specimens in good condition, is now (I think) universally accepted. One can see Laodice's diadem clearly enough in the example which we illustrated in ZPE 104, 1994, Tafel VI h). So Laodice was a princess in her own right, married to a commoner. Her name was borne by the mother of Seleucus I Nikator, and, as a result, occurs bewilderingly often in the Seleucid dynasty. According to W.W. Tarn, *The Greeks in Bactria and India*², Cambridge, 1951, p. 196, Eucratides' mother was 'certainly a Seleucid princess; and her diadem shows that she was the daughter of a king, not of some

¹ This date can not be far wrong, since Eucratides' silver coins with title ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΜΕΓΑΛΟΥ and type of charging Dioscuri are imitated by Timarchus, the rebel Seleucid satrap of Media, in 162 B.C.

² According to Justin 41,6,1, 'eodem fere tempore, sicut in Parthis Mithradates, ita in Bactris Eucratides, magni uterque viri, regna ineunt'. The accession of Mithradates (I) the Great of Parthia is customarily placed c. 171 B.C. though there is no certainty and some have favoured a slightly later date. Compare n. 26 below.

³ In ZPE 104, 1994, 277-278 I suggested that Eucratides may have been responsible, in the mid 160s, for the downfall of Antimachus I Theos and his associated king Eumenes (the latter has left no numismatic traces, and is known only from the tax-receipt published for the first time in the above article by J.R. Rea, R.C. Senior and A.S. Hollis). It is often said that Eucratides overthrew Demetrius son of Euthydemus I, but I suspect that the 'Demetrius king of the Indians' defeated by Eucratides in Justin 41,6,5 is a considerably later ruler (see ZPE 104, 1994, 276-277).

⁴ O. Bopearachchi, *Monnaies Gréco-Bactriennes et Indo-Grecques*, Catalogue Raisonné, Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, 1991, p. 202 (Eucratides I series 4) with n. 17 and Pl. 16.

⁵ This became the standard arrangement on Eucratides' silver tetradrachms and monolingual drachms with the longer legend, although in 1993 Mr. R.C. Senior was shown a tetradrachm with ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΜΕΓΑΛΟΥ engraved horizontally (as on the first attempt for the gold piece).

⁶ A corresponding drachm (series 14 Bopearachchi) is known from just one specimen in the British Museum.

⁷ Most authorities describe the side depicting his parents as the 'reverse'. I follow the suggestion of Bopearachchi, p. 209 n. 48.

⁸ In a very rare variant (series 16 Bopearachchi) the king also brandishes a spear.

collateral'. Tarn (p. 197) estimated her date of birth as 235-225 B.C. and thought that she was an otherwise unrecorded daughter of Seleucus II, thus a sister of Antiochus III.⁹ He may have been right. But perhaps it is worth exploring the possibility that Eucratides' mother Laodice was a Seleucid princess for whose existence we do have other evidence, even though Laodice and consequently Eucratides would have been born ten or fifteen years later than Tarn was prepared to allow.

Antiochus III had at least four daughters. Three of them are named (in the context of marriage) by Appian, *Syr.* 4-5, as Laodice, Cleopatra and Antiochis; the fourth, unnamed, is described as 'the one who remained' (τὴν ἔτι λοιπήν), which suggests that Appian means this catalogue to be complete. We first find Antiochus thinking about a marriage for one of his daughters, by coincidence in Bactria, in the year 206 B.C. Final ratification of the agreement which ended Antiochus' long siege of Bactra-Zariaspa (Polybius 10,49,15, cf. 29,12,8) was conducted, on the Bactrian side, by Demetrius¹⁰ son of Euthydemus, a mere νεανίσκος (19 or 20 years old?) at the time. Impressed by the regal bearing of the young man, Antiochus promised him one of his own daughters in marriage (ἐπηγγείλατο δάσκειν αὐτῷ μίαν τῶν ἑαυτοῦ θυγατέρων, Polybius 11,34,9); it seems unlikely that this impulsive offer was ever fulfilled,¹¹ but, if it was, we would have to credit Antiochus III with a fifth daughter. My concern here is with Laodice (no. 18 of that name in Pauly-Wissowa). In 195 B.C. Antiochus the Great married her to her brother Antiochus (Appian, *Syr.* 4), the first example of such a union in the Seleucid monarchy (of course there were Ptolemaic precedents). But this Antiochus, already elevated to joint kingship with his father, died in the summer of 193 B.C.¹² So Laodice became a widow, as far as we know childless, when she was probably no more than 20 years old, perhaps even younger.

Some scholars¹³ believe that Laodice's subsequent matrimonial career is accounted for, in that she married two more of her brothers, Seleucus IV and Antiochus IV, both of whose wives did indeed bear that name.¹⁴ But this sequence was questioned by André Aymard¹⁵ and described as 'somewhat unlikely' by F.W. Walbank.¹⁶ Might not Antiochus III have thought that his daughter Laodice, widowed after a brief marriage which may have been controversial, should be remarried quietly to an important commoner — a King's Friend, perhaps a Satrap?¹⁷ If Eucratides of Bactria

⁹ And a first cousin of Antiochus IV. Tarn had a great vision of Eucratides acting as agent of Antiochus IV to re-establish Seleucid control over the lost eastern territories. I shall adumbrate a rather different picture.

¹⁰ Unquestionably the Demetrius who later struck the famous silver coins with elephant scalp headdress (Demetrius I series 1-3 Bopearachchi, pp. 164-6 with pls. 4-5). Although he is almost certainly not Justin's 'Demetrius king of the Indians' (n. 3 above), it is probable that he was rightly remembered as a king who extended his power across the Hindu Kush into India (cf. Strabo 11,11,1).

¹¹ Perhaps Antiochus never even got as far as deciding which of his daughters he would marry to Demetrius. To judge from their attested dates of marriage (195 and 193 B.C.), none of the girls would have been near marriageable age in 206 B.C., and so the prospect which Antiochus offered to Demetrius was only a distant one.

¹² For the date 193 B.C. (accepted by J. Briscoe on Livy 35,15,2), see A. Aymard, *Revue de Philologie* 14, 1940, 89-109 and in his *Études d'Histoire Ancienne*, 1967, p. 268.

¹³ E.g. Tarn, *The Greeks in Bactria and India*², p. 185.

¹⁴ Is it possible that occasionally the bride of a Seleucid king may have taken the name of Laodice on marriage?

¹⁵ *Études d'Histoire Ancienne*, p. 243 n. 1.

¹⁶ *Cambridge Ancient History*² vol. VII, Part 1, p. 67 n. 10.

¹⁷ That Heliocles, father of Eucratides, was a man of consequence in the Seleucid, rather than the Bactrian, state, seems almost certain. Surely no Seleucid king would marry his daughter to a commoner from another kingdom. According to Tarn (p. 197), 'Heliocles must have been general of some satrapy'.

were a son of this Laodice, he could hardly have been born before 191 B.C., and it would follow that he was still in his early twenties when he first tried to establish himself as a king in Bactria c. 170 B.C. That seems to me no objection — perhaps even an advantage.¹⁸ Antiochus III was actively ruling at the same age, and Alexander the Great had not been much older when he started his great expedition. It is clear that Eucratides was a man of the utmost energy and ambition; Justin (41,6,4) writes of him ‘multa ... bella magna virtute gessit’. As soon as he became adult, he might have felt discontented with even a high position in the Seleucid administration, and have preferred to seek an independent kingdom further east. Antiochus IV, for his part, c. 170 B.C. might have been glad to provide his able young relative with money and troops, so that he would not have to be feared as a rival in Antiochus’ own kingdom.

Let us return to the silver coins on which Eucratides represents his parents (ZPE 104, 1994, Taf. VI h), Eucratides I series 13-16 Bopearachchi with pls. 19-20). Their portraits are superbly executed in the most realistic detail: Laodice appears as a matronly woman, perhaps about 50 years old, while her husband Heliocles looks appreciably older. His forehead is wrinkled, and there is a deep furrow down his right cheek.¹⁹ In the nature of things, when a ruler issues coins to commemorate his forebears, the latter will be dead. In this unusual case, however, Eucratides did not inherit the kingship from his father Heliocles, and it is worth entertaining the possibility that both Heliocles and Laodice were still alive c. 165 B.C., and portrayed (somewhat unflatteringly) on these coins as they actually looked at that date. This would be consistent with my hypothesis that Eucratides’ mother Laodice was the daughter of Antiochus III. We could take her to have been born c. 213 B.C., married at 18 to her brother Antiochus, widowed at 20, re-married soon afterwards to a powerful commoner some 15 years her senior, and thus about 48 years old when portrayed on the coins of her son Eucratides.

In my opinion the representation of Eucratides (helmeted) on the other side of the same coin (ZPE 104, 1994, Taf. VI h)) could well be that of a man still in his mid-twenties. This raises the question whether we find other, earlier, coins of Eucratides I showing him in his twenties.²⁰ One might imagine that the first known issues of Eucratides were some curious small silver coins (obol, and, it seems, hemiobol),²¹ struck at a time when the king had not yet adopted his characteristic type

¹⁸ Tarn (p. 197) believed that Eucratides was born about 210-205 B.C. and died almost certainly in 159 (p. 219). But we now have reason to think that Eucratides lived until at least the mid 140s; one of the inscriptions from the treasury at Ai Khanoum is dated ‘year 24’, and Paul Bernard, ‘Fouilles d’Ai Khanoum IV: Les monnaies hors trésors; Questions d’histoire gréco-bactrienne’, *Mémoires de la Délégation Archéologique Française en Afghanistan*, tome 28, 1985, pp. 99-100, very reasonably argued that this date represents a regnal year of Eucratides I. But see n. 26 below.

¹⁹ This does not emerge so clearly from the photograph in ZPE 104, 1994, Taf. VI h), but is very apparent in the original coin, as in the specimens reproduced by Bopearachchi, pl. 20, Eucratides I series 15 no. 69 and series 16 n. 71. This furrow is also very obvious in the older portraits of Heliocles’ namesake (quite probably his grandson) Heliocles I (e.g. Bopearachchi pls. 25-26), which may take us down to the 130s B.C.

²⁰ I leave out of this discussion the silver coin of Eucratides with a young portrait and standing Apollo reverse, since, like most scholars (including Bopearachchi pp. 217-219 and pls. 22-23), I would attribute them to a second Eucratides in the next generation.

²¹ These coins are not mentioned in Bopearachchi’s Paris catalogue (n. 4 above), but can be seen in M. Mitchiner, *Indo-Greek and Indo-Scythic Coinage*, London, 1975, vol. I p. 87 (types 165 and 166). The first specimen to reach the West (as far as I know) was seen by me in the London dealers B.A. Seaby Ltd. in August 1972; two more came to Spink and Son at about the same time (published by C. Kirkpatrick in *Spink’s Numismatic Circular*, January 1973, p. 6), and I have seen a few more since 1972. The king wears a rough helmet (unlike his normal smooth helmet); both the helmet and the portrait remind me of the aberrant tetradrachms and drachms of Heliocles (presumably I) with helmeted bust and seated Zeus (Heliocles I series 3 and 4 Bopearachchi with pl. 26).

of the Dioscuri. The enlarged photograph in Mitchiner vol. I p. 87 (type 165) may be of a young man, but clearly it would be wrong to rest any weight on this point. What of the tetradrachms and drachms with legend ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΕΥΚΡΑΤΙΔΟΥ (Eucratides I, series 1 and 2 Bopearachchi) which are naturally taken to precede those with ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΜΕΓΑΛΟΥ ΕΥΚΡΑΤΙΔΟΥ? One might persuade oneself that some specimens²² depict a king in his twenties, but in others he looks older.²³ This point may be thought to cast doubt on my hypothesis concerning the identity of Laodice. On the other hand, a ruler who owes his kingdom to military strength rather than succession from his father might not wish to advertise any impression of himself as immature. Also we can not be certain that, after taking the title ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΜΕΓΑΛΟΥ, Eucratides entirely abandoned the striking of coins with simple ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ.²⁴ In particular there are some examples of tetradrachms and drachms with ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΕΥΚΡΑΤΙΔΟΥ on which the king's portrait looks somewhat different and markedly older.²⁵

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Addendum to J.R. Rea, R.C. Senior and A.S. Hollis, 'A Tax Receipt from Hellenistic Bactria', ZPE 104, 1994, 261-280:

Professor Brian Bosworth of the University of Western Australia draws our attention to 'the extraordinary passage of Strabo (15,1,73) describing the Indian embassy to Augustus. There the ambassadors from King "Porus" deliver a letter written on hide (*diphthera*) in Greek script. This looks the perfect analogy to your Bactrian taxation record, and incidentally it shows that Greek was still known and used in the Punjab about the time of the last Indo-Greek coins.' We would not care to speculate about the identity of King 'Porus' — perhaps a member of the dynasty commonly called Indo-Scythian. The king is described as 'ruler of six hundred kings' (Strabo, *ibid.*), recalling that Indo-Scythian (unlike Indo-Greek) coins regularly bear the title ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΝ. On this embassy see further Lionel Casson, 'The Periplus Maris Erythraei', Princeton 1989, 38. An Indian philosopher who accompanied the ambassadors is said to have come from Bargosa (= Barygaza = Broach).

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²² Including several of the 18 examples of this series found in the Qunduz Hoard (R. Curiel and G. Fussman, 'Le trésor monétaire de Qunduz', Mémoire de la Délégation Archéologique Française en Afghanistan, tome 20, 1965, pls. IX-X, nos. 101-118. Dr. David MacDowall (*per litteras*) agrees that 'there certainly seem to be some young portraits in the ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΕΥΚΡΑΤΙΔΟΥ tetradrachms'.

²³ Contrast the portrait of Euthydemus II in ZPE 104, 1994, Taf. VI d), which is undoubtedly of a very young man.

²⁴ I exclude from the argument very small coins such as silver obols (Eucratides I, series 3 and 9 Bopearachchi) and the unique square bronze (series 10 Bopearachchi) which would hardly have space for ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΜΕΓΑΛΟΥ.

²⁵ E.g. the examples photographed in Mitchiner (n. 21 above), vol. I type 168c (tetradrachm) and 169d (drachm).

²⁶ I am grateful to Dr. David MacDowall for encouraging me to publish this idea, and also for showing me an as yet unpublished paper, 'The Coinages of Eucratides the Great: a Reappraisal', which he read to the 1995 Conference of South Asian Archaeologists in Cambridge. He himself is prepared to allow that Eucratides may have started his rise to power a few years later than 170 B.C. (see n. 2 above for the synchronism with Mithradates the Great of Parthia), so that, if a son of Laodice daughter of Antiochus III, he need not have been quite so young at the beginning of his reign. Dr. MacDowall also considers the possibility that 'year 24' at Ai Khanoum (see n. 18 above) may refer to an Era of Eucratides rather than a regnal year, in which case Eucratides himself might not still have been alive at that time.