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WHEN DID THE GREEKS ABANDON AĪ KHANOUM?

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Over the past thirty years or so, most scholars have accepted the numismatic and epigraphic evidence for dating the end of Greek rule at Aī Khanoum during or immediately after the reign of Eucratides I (ca. 170–145 BCE), as proposed by the excavators.¹ This consensus, however, is not absolute and it remains desirable that all archaeological data be reassessed from time to time in the interests of scientific progress. Thus, Awadh K. Narain has tentatively offered a dissenting view that could possibly date the abandonment of Aī Khanoum as many as fourteen years later (ca. 131 BCE).² Recently, Jeffrey Lerner has argued for a more radical chronological shift that would place the end of Greek control over Aī Khanoum almost a century later (ca. 50 BCE).³ As I have noted elsewhere, Lerner's theory poses a fascinating challenge to the status quo and warrants a close testing of the author's thesis and methodology.⁴ The following analysis, which focuses on the numismatic arguments presented by Lerner and to some extent by Narain as well, is offered here as a tribute to our mutual friend Dr. Vadim M. Masson, accomplished numismatist and distinguished Academician of the Russian Academy of Sciences.⁵ Professor Masson always paid close attention to coin finds and their chronological implications, so this paper contributes to one of his key areas of interest.

¹ For example, Bernard 1985, 97–105; Rapin 1992, 292.

² Narain 2003, 421 (epigraphic) and 292, n. 159 (numismatic).

³ Lerner 2010, 69–72, and more fully in Lerner 2011, 103–147.

⁴ Holt 2012b, 257, n. 88.

⁵ Some of Masson's representative numismatic contributions are listed below in the bibliography.

Categories of Relevant Data

The study of ancient Central Asia relies heavily upon numismatics to help organize the otherwise loosely articulated archaeological sequences discovered there.⁶ Fortunately, numismatic data are relatively abundant across the region; regrettably, this rich supply of evidence often reaches the expert in a less than ideal state. Despoiled hoards, looted sites, forged coins, plundered museums, and many other hazards compromise the survival and assessment of our numismatic sources. Scholars know to be cautious when weighing the reliability of one piece of evidence against another, privileging artifacts that have a firmly attested provenance over those whose testimony may have been undermined along the way. For instance, the so-called Bukhara Hoard of fifty tetradrachms representing the Diodotids, Euthydemus I, and Agathocles was found hidden in a pot near Taxmac-Tepe in 1983 and fully published.⁷ Unfortunately, this ‘intact’ find was not made in a closed archaeological context, for the pot had apparently been transferred and dumped with a truckload of dirt from a neighboring construction site. Were the contents of this single jar the entire hoard, or were there other associated vessels separated from it by the earth-moving operation? How much contextual evidence was lost? Assailed constantly by such apprehensions, archaeologists and numismatists must favor the least ambiguous evidence available to resolve their questions about chronology and culture. All data are important, but not all data are equal.

For convenience and clarity, let us classify into four categories the coins that might establish a date for the cessation of Greek rule at Aï Khanoum: (A) coins excavated as stray finds at the site, (B) coins excavated as the contents of hoards at or near the site, (C) coins that may have been among the contents of hoards discovered/despoiled at or near the site, and (D) coins assumed to have been warehoused at some time in the Aï Khanoum treasury based on the labels inked onto recovered storage jars. Of the 274 coins in category A, fifty cannot be properly identified due to their poor condition.⁸ The remaining 224 stray finds include 31 silver specimens and one gold stater; the preponderance of bronze examples is typical for excavated coins randomly lost around a town or city. This contrasts, of course, with the precious metal issues hoarded at or relatively near Aï Khanoum in categories B and C. The three pertinent hoards forming category B are quite dissimilar to each other. Aï Khanoum Hoard I, excavated in 1970 within the palace complex, provides 677 punch-marked Indian coins, plus six

⁶ Cribb 2007, 333–375; Masson 1955, 37–47; Masson 1956, 63–75; Masson 1957, 109–114.

⁷ Rtveldze 1984, 61–68.

⁸ Bernard 1985, 5. This figure does not include ten unstruck bronze flans excavated at the site.

Indo-Greek drachms of King Agathocles.⁹ Aī Khanoum Hoard II, discovered in 1973 within a dwelling outside the city walls, contains 63 Greek tetradrachms.¹⁰ A third relevant find, not from Aī Khanoum but rather from Khisht Tepe, yields 627 coins, mostly tetradrachms but including 17 drachms and 5 extraordinary double-decadrachms.¹¹ Like the excavated stray finds, these hoarded coins have been reliably recovered and documented, making these nearly 1600 artifacts from categories A and B the most trustworthy numismatic evidence currently available for calculating the end of Greek sovereignty at Aī Khanoum. Even so, as will be shown, some care must be exercised in analyzing the distribution of coins that were disturbed when the city was abandoned, for some coins in category A almost certainly derive from categories B and D, and they must be understood in that larger context.

Alongside the securely provenanced 1597 coins in categories A and B can also be studied, though at much greater risk, the tens of thousands of coins conjectured to exist in categories C and D. Category C includes several hoards containing altogether perhaps 2300–2400 coins. Only one of these hoards (the so-called Aī Khanoum Hoard III) has been published in any detail, based on some photographs and a series of contradictory inventories compiled from 1974 to 1977.¹² One or more additional hoards, identified collectively as Aī Khanoum Hoard IV, has been partially described as containing gold, silver, and bronze issues of Eucratides I and his predecessors.¹³ A large hoard from Kuliab has been partially published.¹⁴ Composed of tetradrachms, drachms, hemidrachms, and obols, this hoard included coins ranging from Alexander the Great through – but not beyond – the reign of Eucratides the Great. In category D, marked storage jars in the Aī Khanoum treasury once held various kinds and amounts of coins, although none of these deposits survived intact; the smashed containers and some loose coins were found scattered around the treasury, with one significant fragmentary vessel recovered from a post-Greek stratum in the main temple.¹⁵ The large sums recorded (up to 10,000 coins per transaction) and the assortment of coinages handled (perhaps Greek, Indo-Greek, and Indian) might afford some chronological relevance to this jumble of data if it can be correctly interpreted.

While much other numismatic evidence exists for the study of ancient Central Asia as a whole, including hoards and stray finds of many kinds, the coins

⁹ Audouin, Bernard 1973, 238–289; Audouin, Bernard 1974, 7–41.

¹⁰ Petitot-Biehler 1975, 23–57; Bernard 1975, 58–69.

¹¹ The so-called Qunduz Hoard: Curiel, Fussman 1965; Masson 1971, 29–34.

¹² Holt 1981, 7–44.

¹³ Bopearachchi 1999, 110–111.

¹⁴ Bopearachchi 1999/2000, 34–53 and 59–60.

¹⁵ Rapin 1992, 95–115; Canali de Rossi 2004, 207–214; Lerner 2011, Appendix.

accounted for in these categories A-D constitute the key testimony for resolving the question of when the Greeks abandoned Aī Khanoum. From this material Lerner, like all scholars, has selected and freighted with meaning the data he deems most compelling. The novelty of his revised chronology arises not from the emphasis placed heretofore by experts upon what is grouped above in categories A and B, but rather from Lerner's accentuation of certain evidence drawn from categories C and D. Let us examine these choices carefully, and then return later to the merits of the status quo ante based on categories A and B.

Selecting Evidence from Category C

From Gades to the Ganges, the rediscovery of ancient hoards favors the farmer's plow and the metal-detectorist's pickax over the archaeologist's tiny trowel. As of 1973, only about 8% of all recorded Hellenistic hoards derived from archaeological excavations.¹⁶ Most coin hoards, then, are poorly recorded and never studied in any scientific way. Of the Hellenistic caches that happen to be enumerated in the numismatic literature, many bear such laconic memoranda as melted down, stolen, or sold. Not counting these, 50% of those found in the Levant, 39% of those from Egypt, and 30% of those recorded further east are described simply as dispersed or disposition unknown.¹⁷ Even those hoards that find safe haven in a museum might eventually be "lost in war" as has been the fate of 20% of Hellenistic hoards from south Russia; one large find from Greece was later lost in transit, sunk by a submarine.¹⁸

Central Asia, of course, has not been immune from the despoliation, destruction, and dispersion of countless coin hoards, including some of the largest ever known.¹⁹ In fact, all of the ancient Greek coins ever found in all the recorded hoards scattered from the Adriatic to the Indus would cumulatively not approach in number those dredged from a single well in a tiny Afghan village. These hundreds of thousands of coins from Mir Zakah, some excavated, some looted, have all been scattered to the winds.²⁰ Yet, numismatists remain determined to salvage as much data as possible from such hoards, taking all due precautions to respect the inherent limitations of this imperfect evidence. This explains the rise of 'rescue numismatics' as a means to document, even if feebly, troves like the Kuliab

¹⁶ Based on data compiled from Thompson, Mørkholm, Kraay 1973. In subsequent volumes of the periodical *Coin Hoards*, this dismal percentage has actually worsened in recent decades.

¹⁷ Statistics derived from Thompson, Mørkholm, Kraay 1973.

¹⁸ Thompson, Mørkholm, Kraay 1973, 93 and 138–149.

¹⁹ Holt 2012a, 138–148.

²⁰ Bopearachchi 2011, 33–73.

Hoard and Aï Khanoum Hoards III and IV that relate to the chronological issue at hand.²¹

Lerner's prerogative is to treat these hoards from category C quite differently from each other. Only about half of the approximately 1500 coins in Aï Khanoum Hoard IV and only about a fourth of the 800 or more coins in the Kuliab Hoard were examined by a competent expert, who found therein one salient though not iron-clad 'fact': None of the specimens he saw post-dated the reign of Eucratides I.²² This chronological range is consistent with the numismatic data in the archaeologically-derived categories A and B. Lerner does not find this observation very compelling, however, for he makes no mention of Kuliab and he tosses out Aï Khanoum Hoard IV "as the total number of coins varies from one informer to the next."²³ Notwithstanding Lerner's remonstrance about a hoard whose contents keep changing, he gives some credence to the fluctuating Aï Khanoum Hoard III, trusting in particular that it contained a drachm of King Lysias "whose reign is thought to have ended around 110 B.C.E."²⁴ In this way, Lerner finds support for the view that the Greeks occupied Aï Khanoum beyond the reign of Eucratides I.

This Lysias drachm provides an interesting methodological crux. It certainly exists in the numismatic record, and it is probably genuine, but how much interpretive weight should it bear as a possible component of a hoard in category C? As the numismatist Margaret Thompson once advised:

"Inherent in all hoards, except those uncovered by scientific excavation, is the possibility of falsification in modern times. Extraneous material may be added to make the collection more attractive or to dispose of items of small value; integral material may be withheld to take advantage of a broader market or to obtain a greater profit on choice pieces. A dispersed hoard can often be reconstituted and infiltrations can usually be detected, but unless there is some certainty that the hoard record is accurate and complete, we cannot safely draw firm deductions from it."²⁵

The "possibility of falsification" referenced by Thompson is a certainty in the case of Aï Khanoum Hoard III. This marketed assemblage undeniably suffered adulteration in both ways possible: extraction and intrusion. Some high-value coins were culled from the lot by dealers, and at least one extraneous coin (a Doson forgery) was added. The final publication of the hoard therefore

²¹ Holt 2012b, deals at length with the promise and pitfalls associated with 'Rescue Numismatics'.

²² Bopearachchi 1999, 110–111.

²³ Lerner 2011, 120, n. 65.

²⁴ Lerner 2010, 71.

²⁵ Thompson 1962, 308.

stressed the provisional nature of the inventory since “it can be demonstrated that its composition has been changed a number of times.”²⁶ Reconstituting Aī Khanoum Hoard III under these circumstances, the possible infiltrations were duly noted – including the Lysias drachm.²⁷ This is the normal procedure, as explained so clearly by Thompson.

Narain has found no reason to agree with the exclusion of the Lysias drachm from the hoard, and Lerner characterizes its dismissal as “too rash.”²⁸ Why, then, was this small coin ever singled out as an intrusion in Aī Khanoum Hoard III? Was it, as Lerner claims, “simply because it does not conform to a paradigm which itself stems from an incomplete archaeological record,” namely that Eucratides I was the last Greek to govern Aī Khanoum? The answer, quite honestly, is ‘yes’. For exactly the same reason that Lerner would like to grant it significance as the one Aī Khanoum coin among thousands that dates long after Eucratides’ reign, other scholars would dismiss it as a likely infiltration tossed (along with a modern forgery) into the unsettled contents of a traveling hoard. The incompleteness of the archaeological and numismatic record, cited by both Narain and Lerner, is no excuse for an inconsistent methodology that trusts one hoard in category C but not the others, or that elevates one coin from category C above everything in categories A and B. Granted, the 1597 coins in A and B may represent an “incomplete archaeological record,” but C (whether 2300–2400 coins or, by Lerner’s reckoning, only about 140) represents an incomplete record with no archaeological basis whatever. Thus, if Lerner is indeed troubled by “the lack of a trustworthy inventory of objects recovered from clandestine excavation at Aī Khanoum,” then he ought to ignore everything in category C, including of course the Lysias drachm. If he opts to include category C, then he may only do so governed by the full testimony of the category subject to the more reliable context of A and B, where the inventory is far more trustworthy. Good methodology seems not to privilege the Lysias drachm above all else.

To his credit, Lerner employs the correct methodology in a related discussion of coins and chronology, this time involving the site of Afrasiab.²⁹ The case at Afrasiab hinges on two obols of Eucratides I, used by Lyonnet to date the Bactrian king’s alleged reconquest of Marakanda. Lerner argues that just two coins whose “provenance remains speculative” cannot bear the chronological burden placed upon them by Lyonnet.³⁰ Lerner concludes: “As matters stand, we are compelled to dismiss the value of these coins altogether for they obfuscate rather

²⁶ Holt 1981, 8.

²⁷ Holt 1981, 11, 17, and 28.

²⁸ Narain 2003, 292, n. 159; Lerner 2011, 123.

²⁹ Lerner 2010, 58–79.

³⁰ Lerner 2010, 61.

than illuminate the chronology of Afrasiab II.”³¹ But for the fact that in this case there are two coins, not one, and the site itself is different, this quotation works equally well for the Lysias drachm alleged to be from Ai Khanoum. Only the Lysias drachm obfuscates the numismatic chronology of the site and, since it certainly has a questionable provenance, we are compelled to dismiss its value as a counterweight to everything else known from categories A-C.

The Dilemma of Category D

By incorporating into the chronological discussion the coins intimated in category D, Lerner advances well beyond the tentative remarks first made by Narain about the contested Lysias drachm. Lerner proposes that epigraphic evidence from Ai Khanoum supports the notion that a bilingual Indo-Greek drachm such as Lysias’ would be perfectly at home in the city’s economy at the time of the Greek abandonment: “The insight provided by these labels about the monetary circulation of the city is that Indo-Greek coins were in the process of replacing or had already replaced Greek Bactrian coins.”³² This statement, however, is not at all true, for it means something quite different from Lerner’s more accurate observation that “the city’s treasury was increasingly dominated by the influx of smaller denominations of a non-Attic standard minted south of the Hindu Kush, *visa vie* [sic] Indo-Greek drachmas and Indian punch-marked coins.”³³ It is a fundamental mistake to reconstruct and quantify the circulation of coinages around the city based on what was stockpiled in the treasury.

The argument offered by Lerner rests on two claims. First, he posits that at the time of the city’s abandonment, Attic-standard Greek drachms, Indo-Greek drachms, and Indian-standard punch-marked coins were all treated as equivalent currencies, accepted as interchangeable in spite of their varying weight standards. He next argues that Greek drachms were a tiny fraction of this currency, “composing a mere 0.88% of all the coins registered in the surviving documents from the treasury.”³⁴ In conjunction with the 70,000 non-Greek Bactrian denominations mentioned in the storage texts, the second-largest group of non-hoarded coins at Ai Khanoum consisted of Indian punch-marked silver, and the largest portion of the hoards accepted by Lerner (Ai Khanoum Hoards I-III) consisted also of non-Greek Bactrian coinages.³⁵ Hence, Lerner’s view of categories A-D

³¹ Lerner 2010, 64.

³² Lerner 2011, 115.

³³ Lerner 2011, 125.

³⁴ Lerner 2011, 124.

³⁵ Lerner 2011, 120.

suggests that “in the years leading up to the city’s abandonment silver locally produced in Bactria was fast disappearing from the market place and was in the process of being replaced by Indo-Greek and Indian punch-marked silver from regions south of the Hindu Kush.”³⁶ In other words, whether we examine coins that were warehoused in the treasury, saved/secreted as hoards beyond the treasury, or lost in everyday use about the city, the Indian and Indo-Greek varieties dominated the final days of the Greek city, perhaps long after the Greek money of Eucratides and his contemporaries had been eclipsed. Does this quantification hold up to scrutiny?

The enabling claim that very different silver coinages had come to be treated as equivalent, regardless of actual weight standards, rests on Lerner’s interpretation of a single pot originating from the Aī Khanoum palace treasury: “The distinction between the value of Greek Bactrian and Indo-Greek silver based solely on weight is, however, contradicted by the vessel containing texts nos. 1a-c, in which both currencies were mixed in the same receptacle, even though they were deposited by different individuals at different times.”³⁷ The texts are taken to mean that to a jar already containing 500 (Greek Bactrian) drachms was added a batch of (Indo-Greek) taxaena and then 10,000 kashapana taxaena, followed perhaps by another deposit of some sort (text 1d). Because none of the texts is erased, the assumption is that the coinages were mixed as obvious equivalents, recorded by number and not by weight. Unfortunately for us all, this container was not found with its contents in situ; in fact, although it clearly originated in the palace treasury, the fragments of the jar (AK P.O. Inventory 2752) were recovered from the post-Greek levels of habitation A south of the temple of the indented niches, where the pot had apparently been carried as loot during the despoliation of the city.³⁸ By Lerner’s reckoning, the plundered vessel contained a mixture of all the coinages labeled on it: 500 Greek drachms plus 10,000 kashapana plus X taxaena (not counting whatever was meant in the fourth text). Since non-Greek Bactrian coins of various kinds (Lerner identifies four designations) normally appear in the Aī Khanoum treasury labels in lots of 10,000, we must consider that this jar 41 cm tall with a capacity of 8.31 liters held a minimum of 20,500 silver coins weighing about 51 kg (112 lbs). This seems a tremendous cumulative burden for a single ceramic vase, one that would be difficult to manhandle in the palace treasury much less haul away as plunder. The more likely explanation is that this jar was used to hold these deposits seriatim, the operative label being easily identifiable by its position and personnel tag without bothering to erase defunct ones (as may have been necessary on jars

³⁶ Lerner 2011, 114.

³⁷ Lerner 2011, 115, cf. 125–127.

³⁸ Rapin 1983, 324–329 and 351; Canali de Rossi 2004, 207–209 and 211.

used more than once in a given administrative period employing the same set of personnel). If modern scholars, including Lerner, can readily discern that the deposits were made in a particular order at different times by different workers, then surely those in charge of the treasury would know the current, latest contents of the vessel.

In any case, even had all types of silver coinage been stored cumulatively in the same vase, this would not mean that the contents were regarded as currency to be used thereabouts as legal tender. A different treasury text references “legal silver” that has been verified by a dokimastes.³⁹ These latter coins one would naturally assume were usable for circulation, if required.⁴⁰ This designation does not apply to the contents of the supposedly mixed jar, nor to any of the vessels holding other deposits of kashapana coins. If the 500 drachms in the mixed jar were still there when the kashapana coins from India were dumped upon them, this does not mean that the later coins were added as equivalents – one Greek drachm of 4.3 g valued the same as one Taxilan kashapana of 2.45 g. This is counter-intuitive, and it would furthermore obviate the notable care taken by the depositors to distinguish at least three kinds of allegedly interchangeable money. Instead, a mixing would indicate that the contents were for some reason treated likewise as so many units of silver, although obviously not the *same* units of silver. This metal might later be sorted and reused to strike legal tender. Why, then, not store it all by weight rather than count? The routine in the treasury was obviously to count everything made of silver, and to deposit it under rubrics that would indicate the appropriate weights – hence the ubiquitous need to identify different coinages by kind and, if possible, origin (Taxila, Nanda). Palace archives might reckon weight and other pertinent details that were superfluous on the storage jars themselves.⁴¹ It is an overreach of the available evidence in category D to claim that very different silver coinages had come to be treated as equivalent by the time the city was abandoned.

There remains, however, the observation that there was a huge amount of this non-Greek silver coinage stockpiled in the treasury, and that it appears in meaningful quantities “found in and around Aī Khanoum.”⁴² This, Lerner insists, shows that Indo-Greek and Indian punch-marked coins were replacing Greek currency in the market place of the city. Not so. The palace treasury, assuredly, held a great deal of coinage from south of the Hindu Kush, along with other valuables taken in war or trade from India.⁴³ This wealth, generally associated under

³⁹ Lerner 2011, 114–115.

⁴⁰ Rapin 1983, 338.

⁴¹ Rapin 1983, 351.

⁴² Lerner 2011, 114.

⁴³ Rapin 1996.

the established chronology with the bellicose career of Eucratides, tells us very little about the market economy of the city or about the kinds and quantities of money circulating there. Category D is evidence of a very specific set of thesaural coinages, not of the circulating currency typical of the city's daily use by merchants and farmers. The evidence from categories A-C does not change this fact. Aī Khanoum Hoard I does not reflect the hoarding of Indo-Greek and punch-marked silver beyond the palace; it is simply loot from the treasury that never even made it outside the palace itself. There is no chance that these coins were hoarded over time from the local economy of Bactria, for they form a close-knit group from Taxila that came in one transfer to Aī Khanoum and never left the palace.⁴⁴ It means nothing that the Indian coins in Aī Khanoum Hoard I exceed in number the Greek Bactrian coins in Aī Khanoum Hoards II and III; the latter were probably drawn from circulation, whereas the context of Hoard I cannot be separated from the specialized, non-market environment of category D, whence it came.

As for non-hoard stray finds excavated around the city, Lerner notes that the second largest group is composed of Indian punch-marked silver.⁴⁵ This might seem significant as an indicator of coinage being used by the populace. The number of specimens given, 28, is correct but quite misleading. Of these finds, 24 actually came from within the palace treasury itself!⁴⁶ These were immediately recognized as more contents of the plundered jars constituting category D, and these tell us nothing about the circulation of such coins in the market. This leaves only four kashapana coins lost about the city out of the 70,000 or so assumed to have been at the site. I have noted elsewhere that these four Indian coins might be sufficient proof that a few such pieces passed in trade before the abandonment of the city, but this is not a strong number and it may only reflect again the pillage that overtook the treasury.⁴⁷ This certainly does not validate the argument that Indo-Greek and Indian punch-marked silver coins were replacing or had already displaced the use of Bactrian Greek coins in the local economy of Aī Khanoum.

The Status Quo Ante

This long but necessary exercise in methodology brings us back to the question of the chronological limits for the Greek abandonment of Aī Khanoum.

⁴⁴ Audouin, Bernard 1973, 238–289; Audouin, Bernard 1974, 7–41.

⁴⁵ Lerner 2011, 120.

⁴⁶ Bernard 1985, 5.

⁴⁷ Holt 2012b, 188–189.

A fair reading of the evidence provided by categories A-D gives little credence to the recent attempt to date this event, or rather process, long after the reign of Eucratides I. Whatever the merits of other kinds of evidence, numismatic data sets that limit around the middle of the second – not first – century BCE. Thus, the status quo ante prevails: If Eucratides I was not the last Greek king to govern the city, one of his near contemporaries surely was.

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Abstract

Over the past thirty years or so, most scholars have accepted the numismatic and epigraphic evidence for dating the end of Greek rule at Aï Khanoum during or immediately after the reign of Eucratides I (ca. 170–145 BCE). This consensus, however, is not absolute and it remains desirable that all archaeological data be reassessed from time to time in the interests of scientific progress. Thus, Awadh K. Narain has tentatively offered a dissenting view that could possibly date the abandonment of Aï Khanoum as many as fourteen years later (ca. 131 BCE). Recently, Jeffrey Lerner has argued for a more radical chronological shift that would place the end of Greek control over Aï Khanoum almost a century later (ca. 50 BCE). As I have noted elsewhere, Lerner's theory poses a fascinating challenge to the status quo and warrants a close testing of the author's thesis and methodology. The following analysis, which focuses on the numismatic arguments presented by Lerner and to some extent by Narain as well, is offered here as a tribute to our mutual friend Dr. Vadim M. Masson, accomplished numismatist and distinguished Academician of the Russian Academy of Sciences. Professor Masson always paid close attention to coin finds and their chronological implications, so this paper contributes to one of his key areas of interest. Whatever the merits of other kinds of evidence, numismatic data sets the chronological limits for the Greek abandonment of Aï Khanoum around the middle of the second century BCE. Thus, the status quo ante prevails: If Eucratides I was not the last Greek king to govern the city, one of his near contemporaries surely was.