Tarkondimotid responses to Roman domestic politics: from Antony to Actium

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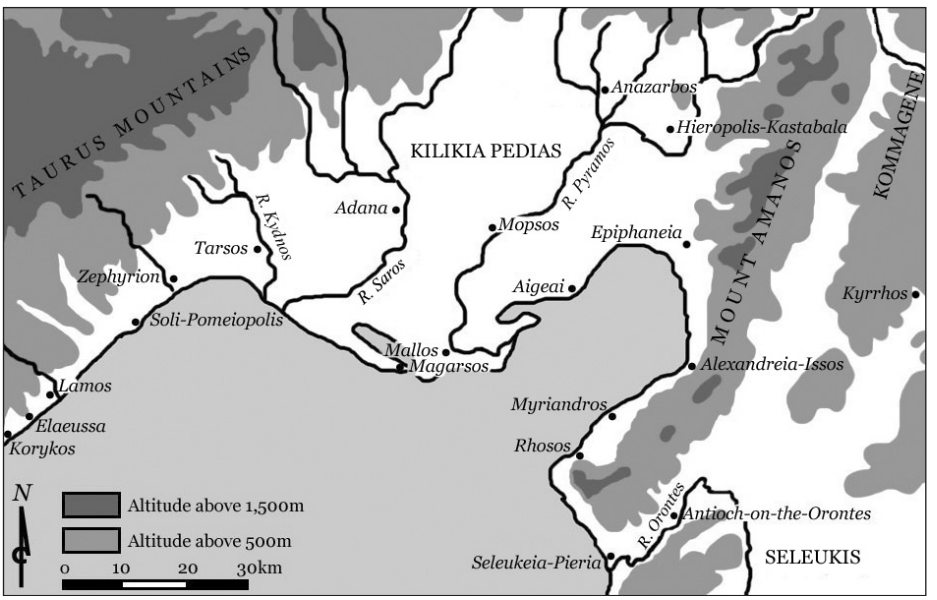

Figure 1. Map of Kilikia Pedias.

Tarkondimotos I was an indigenous ruler who rose to power in the highlands of southern Anatolia during the first century BC (Fig.1). Following the establishment of Roman provinces in Kilikia and Syria, he came to be acknowledged as Rome's most reliable ally in the region and left a sizable and theoretically autonomous estate to his successors. The Tarkondimotid dynasty successfully maintained their regional hegemony until the early first century AD when Tiberius Caesar incorporated their territory directly within the Roman provincial system (Fig. 2).[1] With few exceptions, Tarkondimotos and his progeny have maintained little more than a shadowy presence on the edge of historical accounts of the period. Despite their regional influence and a prominent role in three Roman civil wars, ancient literary and epigraphic references to the dynasty remain sporadic and such a lottery of preservation is necessarily reflected in the modern scholarship. This paper will discuss the reign of Tarkondimotos and his successors within the context of the wider Mediterranean world through the lens of several bronze coin types produced in

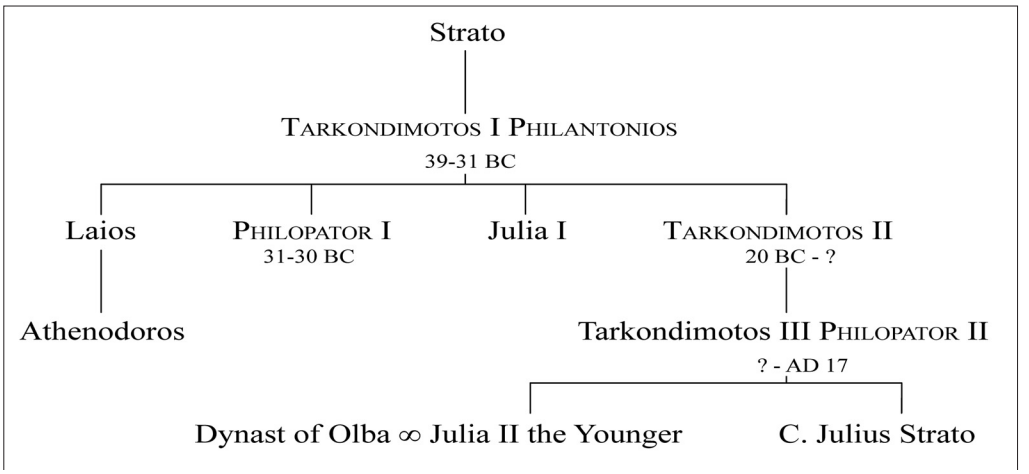

Figure 2. Dynastic stemma showing the Tarkondimotid dynasty and regnal years.

Kilikia between 39 and 30 BC. This paper makes several suggestions which will be more formally investigated in a forthcoming project, looking at the late Hellenistic coinage of Kilikia. It acknowledges the fact that the chronologies of many of the Kilikian civic mints are uncertain and that several of the established chronologies of the region require revision.

Tarkondimotos I was born in Kilikia around 100 BC. His rise to regional power came in the confused period of Seleukid collapse in the late seventies BC. This period saw the conquests of Tigranes of Armenia (74 BC), his repulsion by Lucius Licinius Lucullus (69 BC) and the brief restitution of the Seleukid kingdom.[2] It seems that Tarkondimotos secured the control of the highlands of Mount Amanos in eastern or Upper Kilikia around 70 BC and was confirmed as *toparch* or dynast by Gnaeus Pompey in or after 66 BC.[3] Using Mount Amanos as a natural stronghold, Tarkondimotid influence spread westwards down the Pyramos river valley towards the Gulf of Issos. Although his territory surrounded several Hellenised cities, all appear to have retained some sense of autonomy. In his description of the mountainous areas of Kilikia, Strabo stated: '… the Romans thought that it was better for the region to be ruled by kings [vel sim.] than to be under the Roman prefects sent to administer justice, who were not likely always to be present or to have armed forces with them.'[4] The presence of a friendly ruler over the highlands of Amanos suited Pompey's eastern settlement and effectively linked the ephemeral Roman *provincia Cilicia* with the newly established Roman province of Syria. Following the catastrophic defeat of Marcus Crassus at Karrhai (53 BC) and the Parthian retribution which followed (51 BC), Tarkondimotid Amanos provided a bulwark against the Parthian threat and the Roman governor of Kilikia considered Tarkondimotos Rome's best and most reliable friend beyond the Taurus, 'qui fidelissimus socius trans Taurum amicissimusque populi Romani existimatur.'[5]

Figure 3. Bronze unit of Tarkondimotos I.
Sayles collection

During the civil war between Gaius Julius Caesar and the Pompeian-led senate (49–45 BC), Tarkondimotos I made the first of a long run of decisions which saw him consistently back the loser in Roman domestic political struggles. He actively supported his old ally Pompey, probably serving as a naval commander under the Pompeian admiral Gaius Cassius Longinus.[6] After the Caesarian victory, Tarkondimotos was pardoned for his support of Pompey and confirmed in his position, perhaps even receiving the *tria nomina*.[7] The unstable nature of Romano-Parthian relations in this period meant that it was in Rome's interests to maintain friendly relations with Upper Kilikia. The assassination of Caesar in 44 BC saw a redistribution of influential Romans across the Mediterranean, and Tarkondimotos allied himself with his erstwhile comrade Gaius Cassius, one of the leading figures among the assassins[8]. Following the defeat of the assassins at Philippi two years later, Tarkondimotos I made a more lasting and beneficial pact with Mark Antony, the new master of the Roman East.[9]

In 40 BC a second Parthian invasion annexed the province of Syria and drew many of the indigenous dynasts into an anti-Roman alliance. Tarkondimotos remained loyal to Roman interests and the following year was granted the royal title and permission to mint bronze coins in his own name (Fig. 3). The reverses of the resulting issues employed not only his name and title ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΤΑΡΚΟΝΔΙΜΟΤΟΥ (of King Tarkondimotos), but also the epithet ΦΙΛΑΝΤΩΝΙΟΥ (friend of Antony) declaring that his personal relationship with Antony was a matter of state importance. On one issue, the first four letters of the king's name have been replaced by the monogram ⍃ in which the combination of the *alpha* and *tau* produced a *kappa* when the monogram was rotated by 90 degrees ⍄ .[10]

The reverse type depicted an enthroned Zeus Nikephoros of the form well established by the later Seleukids. The enthroned Zeus was a familiar type and may have been employed to suggest a legitimacy derived from Seleukid authority. However, just as the late Seleukids used Zeus because of his acceptability among their indigenous subjects as the Hellenised rendering of the vernacular Ba'al, so Zeus found equal validity as Tarḫu[nt], the sky-god of the Luwian Kilikians and the theophoric prefix of Tarkondimotos' own name.[11] Zeus formed a natural choice for the reverse type of the royal coinage of Tarkondimotos.

The obverse type showed the king's head, diademed in the manner of other Hellenistic kings. However, the style of depiction conforms wholly to the veristic school of *philorhomaios* portraiture. Far from the youthful, idealised representations of earlier eastern kings who had flouted Rome's will, *philorhomaios*' portraits espoused the traditions of late Republican Roman sculpture, stressing *gravitas*,

Figure 4. Bronze unit of Tarkondimotos I with anchor countermark.

Numismatik Lanz, München, Auction 138 lot 448

discipline and maturity.[12] Although a Hellenistic king in function, Tarkondimotos was depicted as a friend of Rome and a man who could be relied upon to uphold Roman virtues and policy.

As the storm clouds of a new civil war in Rome gathered, Tarkondimotos, now in his late 60s or early 70s, led his fleet once more in support of his Roman patron. In 31 BC, Tarkondimotos was serving with Gaius Sosius, Antony's admiral, off the west coast of Greece.[13] There, at Actium, the forces of Antony and Octavian faced each other in what was to become one of the more decisive battles in Roman history. Immediately prior to the famous naval encounter at Actium, one of Octavian's junior admirals, was engaged by Antony's fleet under Sosius and routed. In the ensuing pursuit, the Antonian fleet was in turn engaged by Octavian's newly arrived ships under Marcus Agrippa and was defeated. Tarkondimotos led his own squadron during the engagement and died fighting against Agrippa.[14] He was succeeded in Kilikia by his sons, Philopator I and Tarkondimotos II.

It would appear that one of the first actions taken by Philopator on his succession was to systematically countermark his father's regal coins with an anchor symbol across the neck of the obverse portrait (Fig. 4). The choice of a maritime symbol to legitimise the coinage of a king who had just died in a naval battle may not be as strange as it first sounds. The anchor was widely understood as a sign of safety, and the symbol had been the official mark of the Seleukids from earliest times as a subtype, reverse type, a symbol on official weights and seals, and as a countermark. In this context the countermark may have symbolised the right of the Tarkondimotidai as successors of the Seleukids to continue their rule in Kilikia during the uncertainty that followed the battle of Actium.[15] Furthermore, Tarkondimotos I's regal coins have a uniform die axis of 12 o'clock. By hammering the countermark punch into the neck of the obverse portrait, any detail below the exergue line of the reverse type became obliterated. This was precisely the location of the epithet 'Philantonios' which has become all but invisible on the known countermarked specimens of this coin type. Through the countermarking process Philopator I was making a dual statement stressing both his own legitimacy and, just as important in the political environment after Actium, reneging on his father's support of Antony. Even so, he maintained the royal title for little more than a year before Octavian officially relieved him of the kingship in 30 BC.[16] Nevertheless, Philopator retained his influential position within the region, probably with the hereditary title of toparch although specific evidence for this is lacking.

The same monogram employed by Tarkondimotos I,  , was reproduced on the regal coinage of his grandson Tarkondimotos III Philopator II as an

Figure 5. Bronze unit of Soli-Pompeiopolis.
Private collection

abbreviated form of the king's name, only the surname/epithet being spelled out in full.[17] Between the two regal issues there can be no doubt as to the meaning of the monogram in first century BC/AD Kilikia. Related monograms (for example  ,  and ) occur on autonomous issues produced by neighbouring civic polities, most significantly Anazarbos, which was likely the kingdom's administrative centre and mint. The only monograms present on the coinage of Anazarbos before the Roman period may be disarticulated as either ΤΑΡΚ or ΦΙΛΟΠ, the prefixes of the only known names used by the Tarkondimotid dynasts. Although Philo- names are not unusual in the Hellenistic world, Tark- names are rather less common. The restrictive use of only these two types of monograms at Anazarbos is certainly suggestive that the dynasty was influential in the city, although the pre-Roman civic coinage at Anazarbos is probably restricted to the period after Actium.[18]

However, to return to the fallout after Actium: in 30 BC the sons of Tarkondimotos I, Philopator I and Tarkondimotos II fought a campaign against a force of rebellious pro-Antonian gladiators. The gladiators had been training in Kyzikos in northern Asia province in preparation for the victory celebrations planned by Antony to crown the Actium campaign. On hearing news of the defeat and the defections of Antony's allies, the gladiators marched overland through Asia to Kilikia en route to Egypt where the remaining Antonian forces were gathering. The gladiators were defeated by Philopator I and Tarkondimotos II somewhere in Kilikia, and although they were able to pass through to Syria, they were easily vanquished there by the Roman governor and never reached Antony in Egypt.[19] Denied the royal title by Octavian, Philopator I took the opportunity to strike a civic bronze coinage at Anazarbos bearing his name in monogram form ( ) and depicting the city goddess on the reverse surrounded by a wreath border, perhaps in reference to his victory.[20] Philopator I publicised his local success in a format that would not attract Roman displeasure.

Two interesting issues were produced at Soli-Pompeiopolis, which might also date to this period. Although Soli's standard civic types were retained, the joint monograms  or  were utilised on the reverses (Fig. 5).[21] Soli-Pompeiopolis was too far removed from Upper Kilikia under Philopator I to be seriously considered as an integrated component of the Tarkondimotid state. The monograms combine names for both Philopator and Tarkondimotos (with Philopator in the senior position) and bear evidence for some sort of civic-dynastic interchange. The autocratic dynasts may have been honoured for their benefactions towards the city and its *demos* by being awarded honorary positions within the civic power structure. The issues are undated and presently float within an undefined

chronological framework. The campaign conducted by Philopator I and Tarkondimotos II against the Antonian gladiators in 30 BC provides the perfect example of one kind of dynastic benefaction, the defence of the civic polity from a hostile force. More powerful autocrats had been deified by cities for similar or lesser actions in previous centuries. The burial of a hoard of Aigeaiote tetradrachms dated to 30 BC or shortly after, and might also point towards the uncertain conditions prompted by the battle of Actium and the gladiator campaign.[22]

Having established the plausible presence and purpose of later Tarkondimotid monograms on the civic coinage of Kilikia, we may now turn back to the period before 31 BC and the battle of Actium. The city of Aigeai was a Macedonian colony, probably established by Seleukos I in the early third century BC. There is no written or epigraphic evidence which bears witness to the relationship between Aigeai and the Tarkondimotids, although it is widely accepted that Aigeai may have been subject to Tarkondimotos I during the second quarter of the first century BC. The suggestion that the port-city of Aigeai was controlled by, or closely allied to, the Tarkondimotidai is a logical one based on both its proximity to the dynastic heartland and the need of the otherwise land-locked Tarkondimotids for an access point to the Gulf of Issos and the wider Mediterranean. Just when the city came under the influence of the Tarkondimotids is difficult to ascertain although, as we have seen, Tarkondimotos I was able to assist Pompey with a fleet as early as 48 BC. The city was officially granted autonomy by Julius Caesar in 47 BC.[23]

The coinage of Aigeai represents one of the few Hellenistic Kilikian series that has received proper scholarly attention in the form of dedicated studies by Hansjörg Bloesch, on the silver coinage in 1979 and the bronze in 1982.[24] Bloesch's treatment of Aigeai's coinage has remained unchallenged by the numismatic community for over twenty years. He divided the coinage of Aigeai into six periods based on differentiations in the legend and monograms (several of which suggest later Tarkondimotid influence) although most of the obverse and reverse types remain constant throughout the Hellenistic period. A number of bronze coins in Bloesch's period 6 bore dates for the years 10, 14 and 19. In addition, a series of silver tetradrachms were issued bearing dates for years 4, 13, 16, 17 and 18. While Bloesch acknowledges that stylistically the dated bronzes and dated silver issues were not contemporaneous, he arbitrarily assigns the dated bronzes to the era following the Caesarian grant of freedom—he does not suggest an era for the dated silver coins. The use of two different dating systems employed successively by the same mint was not unusual in Kilikia and Syria as the political status of cities changed. However, there is no basis behind the attribution of the dated bronze series rather than the silver coins to the era beginning 47 BC. Therefore, while Bloesch's periodisaton of the bronze coins continues to show groups of near-contemporaneous issues, the dates that he proposes for each group are groundless.

It is hoped that future study will revise the chronology of the Hellenistic coinage

Figure 6. Bronze unit of Aigeai.

Sayles collection

of Aigeai. Here it suffices to discuss a single series which bore the double monogram 𐤀𐤉 and which may bear relevance to the study of Romo-Kilikian relations under Mark Antony (Fig. 6).[25] The series to which this issue belongs has been dated by Bloesch to the period 130–77 BC. Following a suggestion first made by Wayne G. Sayles (*pers. comm.*) I would suggest down dating the series in general to between 47 and 30 BC, and the issues bearing this particular monogram to between 38 and 34 BC. Just as I have suggested that the 𐤀𐤔 double monogram at Soli may allude to joint honours being bestowed upon figures of regional importance, so it is plausible to link the 𐤀𐤉 monograms of Aigeai with two individuals who exerted influence over the port-city and its mint—the neighbouring king Tarkondimotos I and Gaius Sosius, the Roman governor of Syria and Kilikia. The suggestion is tentative but not untenable. Sosius was Antony's quaestor or financial officer in 39 BC and minted money in his own name, bearing the portrait of Antony, to pay the Roman fleet stationed in the Adriatic.[26] In 38 BC Sosius was appointed by Antony to administer the joint provinces of Kilikia and Syria, and during this period might have struck a bronze coinage bearing his own portrait and the abbreviated form of his official position, Q(uaestor).[27]

As an experienced naval commander governing Kilikia and Syria, it would come as no surprise to find Sosius interacting with the port-city Aigeai which sat, theoretically autonomously, in-between both provinces. Until 47 BC, Aigeai may have been directly controlled by Tarkondimotos I. There is no indication of any ill will between the city and the dynast following Caesar's grant of freedom—Tarkondimotos continued to control Aigeai's hinterland and almost certainly made use of its port. It is not unreasonable to suppose that Sosius and Tarkondimotos, both comrades of Antony, may have held an honorary joint magistracy at the nominally autonomous port-city. If this was the case, it is interesting to note that Sosius was honoured as the more senior official. If the possibility for a joint magistracy is accepted then the 𐤀𐤉 issues of Aigeai reinforce the need for further revision of the established chronology.

It has been shown that the domestic arrangements developed in Rome during the late republic echoed across the Mediterranean. Tarkondimotos and his successors were forced to walk the proverbial tight-rope of continued prosperity as the political environment in Rome shifted. His elevation to king in 39 BC allowed Tarkondimotos to strike autonomous coinage in his own name. The types he chose represented the dominant influences that impacted on his kingship—the Hellenistic past and the Roman present. The reverse type of Zeus Nikephoros looked back to late Seleukid iconography and may have found favour as a representation of the Luwian storm-god

Tarḫu[nt]. The Greek reverse legend proclaimed Tarkondimotos king, but his epithet, Philantonios, spoke loudly of the true power behind the throne. The obverse portrait bore the diadem of Hellenistic royalty, but the veristic representation of the king informed the audience that Tarkondimotos was a ruler of a new kind, beholden to Roman politicians and depicted in a manner they could trust and understand. Through bad choices or bad luck, Tarkondimotos continuously backed the losers in Rome's domestic struggles and his sons were forced to live with the consequences. The carefully placed countermarking of the royal coins of Tarkondimotos I reinforced the pre-Roman origins of the Tarkondimotid dynasty, while simultaneously obliterating the claim of allegiance to Antony. Compared to his descendants, whose monograms appear repeatedly across Kilikia, monograms specifically linked to Tarkondimotos I are difficult to identify. One exception to this might be the  double monogram at Aigeai which put Tarkondimotos in his realistic place, honoured by a provincial city but subservient to a Roman administrator.

References.

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5. Cic. *ad Fam*. 15.1.2.
6. Florus 2.13.5; Dio Cass. 41.63; Caes. *B Civ*. 3.3, 3.101.
7. Dio Cass. 41.63. Tarkondimotos may be the inspiration behind the unnamed Kilikian chief in Luc. 9.217–250. Lucan refers to the character as 'ancient', hardly appropriate for a man in his mid-fifties, although as noted above (n.2) the author is notorious for his use of poetic licence. On the grant of *tria nomina*, see R.D. Sullivan, *Near Eastern royalty and Rome, 100–30 BC*, Toronto, 1990, 190; J. Tobin, 'The Tarcondimotid dynasty in Smooth Cilicia', in É. Jean, A.M. Dinçol, and S. Durugönül (eds.) *La Cilicie. Espaces et pouvoirs locaux (2e millénaire av. J.-C.—4e siècle ap. J.-C.): Actes de la Table ronde internationale d'Istanbul, 2-5 novembre 1999*, Paris, 2001 383.
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24. H. Bloesch, 'Tetradrachms of Aegeae (Cilicia)', in O. Mørkholm and N.M. Waggoner (eds.), *Greek numismatics and archaeology: essays in honor of Margaret Thompson*, Wetteren, 1979, 1–7; ibid, 'Hellenistic coins of Aegeae (Cilicia)', *American Numismatic Society Museum Notes* 27 (1982) 53–96.
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26. *RPC* I: 1290–3.
27. *RPC* I: 5409–10 reattributes this issue to Kilikia or Syria from Macedonia based on find spots and tentatively identifies the portrait as Octavian. However the portrait bears no resemblance to other images of Octavian and the Q abbreviation was also used by Sosius at Zakynthos suggesting that the issue may have been produced during the joint Syro-Kilikian administration of Sosius. This association has been noted by both Classical Numismatic Group (electronic auction 140, lot 116 and Triton V, lot 521) and Gorny & Mosch Giessener Münzhandlung (auctions 114, lot 152 and 134, lots 1761–2).

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