

# Notes on the Evolution of Alchon Coins

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Organizing the coins of the Alchon (or Alkhon or Alkhan) Huns into a coherent series has proven to be a challenging task. In his seminal work on this coinage,<sup>2</sup> Robert Göbl identified many types and tried to create some kind of order for them, but did not make much headway because the coins did not seem to follow a clear chronological sequence. Recently, new energy was imparted to the study of these coins by the discovery and publication by Gudrun Melzer of a copper scroll inscription from the Schøyen Collection which names four of the Alchon kings known from their coins.<sup>3</sup> Although the find spot of the scroll is not known, the scroll itself identifies its probable place of origin: a town called Tālagān. Melzer suggested in her paper that this was probably the town of Tālaqān in northern Afghanistan (north of the Hindu Kush mountains), but Étienne de la Vaissière<sup>4</sup> has argued persuasively that it was rather the town of Talagang in Pakistan, just north of the Salt Range and south of the Hindu Kush. The four kings mentioned in the scroll, mahāśāhi Khīngīla, devarāja Toramāna, mahāśāhi Mehama and maharaja Javūkha, are all listed as donors in the establishment of a Buddhist stupa in Tālagān. For the first time, we can feel secure in the identities of these four kings and coins that bear their names can safely be assigned to them, something Göbl had not always done because of possible ambiguities in the reading and interpretation of the coin legends.

This task has been taken up recently by Vondrovec<sup>5</sup> and Alram and Pfisterer,<sup>6</sup> who have attempted to assign coins to each of these rulers.<sup>7</sup> While this is a clear advance over previous work, it still leaves open the question of the coin sequencing and how the coinage evolved. In her paper, Melzer had suggested that the fact that all four of these kings were mentioned as donors indicates that they were contemporaries and ruled at around the same time. This suggestion would lead naturally to a new strategy for organizing Alchon coins: to arrange them in at least

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<sup>2</sup> Robert Göbl: *Dokumente zur Geschichte der Iranischen Hunnen in Baktrien und Indien*, Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1967.

<sup>3</sup> Gudrun Melzer (in collaboration with Lore Sander): "A Copper Scroll Inscription from the Time of the Alchon Huns," in *Manuscripts in the Schøyen Collection, Vol. III: Buddhist Manuscripts*, Oslo: Hermes Publishing, 2006, pp. 251-278.

<sup>4</sup> Étienne de la Vaissière: "A Note on the Schøyen Copper Scroll: Bactrian or Indian?" *Bulletin of the Asia Institute*, New Series, Volume 21, 2007 (published 2012), pp. 127-130.

<sup>5</sup> Klaus Vondrovec: "Numismatic Evidence of the Alchon Huns reconsidered," *Beiträge zur Ur- und Frühgeschichte Mitteleuropas*, 50 (2008), pp. 25-56.

<sup>6</sup> Michael Alram and Matthias Pfisterer: "Alkhan and Hephthalite Coinage," in Michael Alram, *et. al.* (eds): *Coins, Art and Chronology II*, Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2010, pp. 13-38. I understand that Pfisterer has some new unpublished work on these coins, but I have not seen this.

<sup>7</sup> Vondrovec actually leaves Toramāna out of his analysis and Alram and Pfisterer mention him only slightly, because no Sasanian or Alchon style silver coins are yet known for this king.

four sequences, anchored by the four kings mentioned in the inscription. But Melzer's suggestion has been challenged by de la Vaissière,<sup>8</sup> who pointed out that the listing of the names does not automatically imply that all the kings were alive at the time of the inscription. As de la Vaissière points out, the inscription also mentions Javūkha's father, Sādavīkha, as a donor in the same manner as all the other persons listed. Given that Javūkha was ruling at the time, it is likely that his father was no longer alive. Thus it is entirely possible that some of the other kings mentioned were also no longer alive at the time of the inscription.

Of course, de la Vaissière's objection to Melzer's suggestion does not demonstrate that the four kings in question were *not* ruling simultaneously, only that it is possible that they were not doing so. In this paper, I wish to show why there is evidence in the numismatic record that at least three of the four kings did not rule sequentially, and that the strategy of organizing the coins into different sequences can be a productive way of looking at and organizing the coinage. In the process, I publish some previously unrecorded and rare coins of the Alchon Huns that help to make my point and to fill out more of the details of the coin sequences. The point is not to create a new ordering of all Alchon coins, which is a task beyond the scope of this paper; rather, I hope to suggest an approach that might help in this bigger task. This approach is also a first step towards a classification of the coins according to mints of production.

## The Early Anonymous Series

All authors agree that the earliest Alchon coins were based on Sasanian prototypes (Göbl types 33-39). These coins used Sasanian designs, but added the word *alchon* (or *alkhan*) and a distinctive Alchon style tamgha to the obverse of the coins, the so-called "bull" tamgha that supposedly represents the horns of a bull. Actually, considering the important role played by the lunar crescent in the crowns of the kings, it seems more likely that this tamgha represented a lunar crescent rather than a bull's horns. Be that as it may, the "bull"/lunar tamgha was an important feature of these early coins. Vondrovec refers to these coins as belonging to the period of the "Anonymous Clan Rulers"<sup>9</sup> and Alram and Pfisterer call these the first and second minting phases.<sup>10</sup> These coins do not concern us here. What followed, however, were the first coins with truly new features, and these are the starting point for the analysis in this paper.

In this new phase (Göbl types 40-43), which I am calling the "Early Anonymous Series," the Sasanian style bust was replaced by a characteristic Alchon style bust, in which the king's head is presented in an elongated form to reflect the Alchon practice of head binding. Apart from the elongated head, these coins have several distinctive features:

1. The bust is bare-headed; in particular, the king wears no diadem or crown.
2. The king wears a necklace with two ribbons attached to it. These ribbons replace the diadem ends typically seen on Sasanian coins.
3. The characteristic "bull"/lunar tamgha of the Alchon is featured in the right field.
4. There is a crescent in the upper left field.

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<sup>8</sup> de la Vaissière, *op. cit.*

<sup>9</sup> Vondrovec, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

<sup>10</sup> Alram and Pfisterer, *op. cit.*, pp. 15-17. The first phase consisted of coins struck with Sasanian dies that had been modified to include the Alchon elements, while the second phase consisted of coins struck with newly carved dies that nevertheless preserved the basic Sasanian designs.

5. A Brāhmī letter is present in the lower left field.

<b>Table 1: The Early Anonymous Series</b>		
Coin 1 (#476.1)		Göbl type 41 <i>var</i> 3.84 gm, 30 mm 
Coin 2 (#482.2)		Göbl type 43 3.63 gm, 28 mm
Coin 3 (#446.5)		Göbl type 43 <i>var</i> (unpublished) 3.10 gm, 29 mm 

Note: All coins in this paper are from my personal collection and the photographs are self-taken unless specifically noted. The # number for each coin is its inventory number. The coin images are only roughly to relative scale.

None of the coins identifies an individual king; rather they all bear the legend *alchono* or *alchonano* in Bactrian letters.

Three examples of these types are presented in Table 1. Coin 1 is a variant of Göbl type 41 and shows all the elements in the list above, except that the Brāhmī letter in the left field has been partially obscured. This is part of the reason that this coin is interesting. A close examination reveals that the left field of the obverse die has been re-cut. Originally, the ribbons attached to the necklace were carved in a vertical position closer to the left border on the coin and it is possible that there was no crescent. Then the die was re-cut to re-position the ribbons in the slanted position seen on the coin. This can be seen clearly in the detail image in the right-hand column of the table. In the process of the re-cutting, the Brāhmī letter in the lower left field was partially obscured. Why exactly the die was re-cut is hard to know for sure. One possibility

is that the die cutter needed to make space for the crescent in the upper left field, either because of a design change or because he had forgotten to include it when first carving the die. Since no coin of this type has ever been found without a crescent, I find the second possibility the more likely explanation, but we cannot rule out the possibility that the crescent was not part of the original design for this type.

Coin 2 is an example of Göbl type 43, which features the Brāhmī letter *śi* in the left field. In this example, the ribbons attached to the king's necklace take a slightly different form; they form two distinct cylindrical shapes rather than the conjoined triangular shapes seen in coin 1.

Finally, coin 3 is a previously unpublished variant of Göbl type 43, on which the Brāhmī letter is now *pa* (see detail photo at right), previously not noted on any of these coins. We do not yet know the significance of these letters.

These early anonymous Alchon coins form a baseline from which it appears at least three different strands of Alchon coinage evolved. In succeeding sections, I will consider the coinages of each of the four kings mentioned in the Schøyen inscription and suggest coin series that could be created around each of them. We shall see that the coinages of at least three of the kings can arguably be derived directly from these early coins, suggesting the possibility of independent evolution. The goal is not to create an exhaustive listing of all Alchon coins, but only to provide the outlines of what these different series might look like and what some of their constituents would be.

## The Kṣīṅgila Series

Kṣīṅgila is the first king mentioned in the Schøyen inscription and it is also the case that his coins seem most closely related to the early anonymous coins, so it is appropriate to consider first the series of coins built around his coinage. Table 2 shows thirteen coins (Coins 4-16) that I believe constitute an evolving sequence that starts with the earliest coins of Kṣīṅgila. The sequence of evolution is discussed in what follows.

The first coin, coin 4 (Göbl type 57), is perhaps the earliest coin type of Kṣīṅgila and we can see a close similarity to coin 2 in Table 1. As on coin 2, the king is shown here bare-headed with an elongated head, wearing a necklace with two ribbons attached to it and forming two cylindrical shapes. The overall style of the two coins is very similar. The differences are:

1. The tamgha has migrated from the right field to the left field, replacing the crescent on coin 2. Incidentally, this replacement further suggests that the tamgha is meant to hold a crescent, as it performs that function on this coin.
2. The space left open in the right field is now occupied by an inscription in Brāhmī that reads *khigi*.
3. The Brāhmī letter in the left field has been replaced by a somewhat unclear symbol that Göbl identified as a rhombus.

These differences represent normal evolutionary changes that we might expect to see in an evolving or developing coinage.



**Table 2: The Khiṅgila Series**

<p>Coin 4 (#304.3)</p>		<p><i>“khigi”</i> Göbl type 57 3.45 gm, 25 mm</p>
<p>Coin 5 (British Museum 1894. 0506. 201)</p>		<p><i>“khiggilo šoyo zoobl”</i> Göbl type 59 (details n.a.)</p>
<p>Coin 6 (Zeno 76988)</p>		<p><i>“šoyo alchono”</i> Göbl type 60 3.03 gm</p>
<p>Coin 7 (#607.2)</p>		<p><i>“khiggilo alchono”</i> Göbl type 61 3.66 gm, 30 mm</p>

<p>Coin 8 (#668.72)</p>		<p><i>“šoyo alchono”</i> Göbl type 70 3.38 gm, 29 mm</p>
<p>Coin 9 (#644.87)</p>		<p><i>“khinkila alchono”</i> Unpublished var of Göbl type 70 3.51 gm, 27 mm</p>
<p>Coin 10 (#327.02)</p>		<p><i>“devaṣāhi khiṅgila”</i> Göbl type 81 3.59 gm, 28 mm</p>
<p>Coin 11 (Zeno 99188)</p>		<p><i>“ṣāhi lakhāna”</i> Unpublished 3.31 gm, 27 mm</p>
<p>Coin 12 (CNG eAuction 296 lot 136)</p>		<p><i>“ṣāhi lakhāna”</i> Unpublished 4.20 gm, 26 mm</p>



Coin 13 (#666.60)		<i>“ṣāhi lakhāna”</i> Unpublished 5.60 gm, 27 mm
Coin 14 (#665.56)		<i>“alchono rājā lakhāna”</i> Göbl type 80 3.82 gm, 28 mm
Coin 15 (#234.3)		<i>“rājā lakhāna udayāditya”</i> Göbl type 79 3.79 gm, 26 mm
Coin 16 (#408.17)		<i>“jayatu ṣāhi javūvlah”</i> Göbl type 82 3.52 gm, 27 mm 

Note: Image of coin 5 © Trustees of the British Museum, used by permission; image of coin 12 used by permission from CNG.

Coin 5 (Göbl type 59) may have been roughly contemporaneous with coin 4, perhaps at a different mint. The style of this coin is quite different from that of coin 4, indicating at least that it was carved by a different hand, and yet it has some of the same key characteristics: the bare-headed bust and the ribbons attached to the king's necklace. The legend is now in Bactrian letters: *khiggilo šoyo zoobl*. Coin 6 (Göbl type 60) does not name Khiṅgila, but can be assigned to him because of its similarity to coins 5 and 7, both of which do name him. Indeed, coin 6

serves as a bridge between coins 5 and 7. It retains the bare-headed bust and the ribbons attached to the necklace as seen on coin 5, but adds prominent shoulder ornaments that have been described as flames or fly-whisks, but which I believe represent wings. Whatever they are, they were probably intended to indicate the divinity of the king.

Coin 7 (Göbl type 61) represents an important stage in the development of Khiṅgila's coinage. While it retains the shoulder ornaments of coin 6, it introduces a significant new feature: the king now wears a diadem. The diadem sports a crescent at the king's forehead and, most importantly, features diadem ends that hang from the tie, replacing the ribbons that had previously been attached to the necklace. This coin therefore marks the end in the Khiṅgila series of the bare-headed bust with ribbons attached to the necklace. One other aspect of this coin type worth noting is that the bull/lunar tamgha, which had disappeared from coins 5 and 6, makes a reappearance on the coin.

Coin 8 (Göbl type 70) may have been issued in parallel with coin 7. It is the direct successor of coin 6, with which it shares its style and legend, but it introduces the diadem with the forehead crescent ornament and the hanging diadem ends. In addition, as on coin 7, the bull/lunar tamgha is reintroduced, although here it is placed in the left field. The right field introduces a new symbol: an oval rosette like shape that may represent the sun, a *cakra* or a wheel.

Coin 9 is a previously unpublished type that serves as a bridge between coin 8 and the well-known Khiṅgila type seen in coin 10. Coin 9 retains the shoulder ornaments of coin 8 but has a new, finer style. The "wheel" ornament is more clearly delineated and the Bactrian legend to the left of the head is replaced by a Brāhmī legend that is unclear, but which I am tentatively reading as *khinkila* (see detail in the right hand column).<sup>11</sup> The Bactrian legend *alchono* to the right of the head is retained.

Coin 10 (Göbl type 81) is the last coin type that can definitively be assigned to Khiṅgila. Stylistically, it is similar to coin 9 and it retains the tamgha at left and the sun/wheel at right. But it eliminates the shoulder "wing" ornaments, replacing them with crescent tips on both shoulders. In addition, the diadem ends develop a slight waviness rather than hanging limply, and the legend is now all in Brāhmī and reads *devaṣāhi khiṅgila*.

We now turn to extensions of the Khiṅgila series. Coins 11-13 are all unpublished coins of a new type that have recently appeared on the trade market. Two specimens of the type represented by coin 11 were listed on the zeno.ru website; coin 12 was sold in a CNG auction and coin 13 was offered privately to me. It is clear that all these coins belong to the same family. They are stylistically close to coin 10, with a similar bust, crescent tips on the shoulders and a sun/wheel in the right field. Looking at different specimens, I tentatively read the Brāhmī legend as *ṣāhi lakhāna*. Stylistically, these coins form a bridge from the last coins of Khiṅgila to the well-known "*rājā lakhāna*" coins (Göbl type 80, see coin 14 in the Table), and the legend

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<sup>11</sup> Matthias Pfisterer, in a private email, indicated he thinks the legend at left is a retrograde legend in Bactrian letters that reads *ṣauo*, which may well be correct, although I don't see that on my specimen. This reading would not affect the place of this coin in my schema.



reading, if correct, would further support the idea that these coins were issued in between Göbl types 81 and 80.

Before moving on to coin 14, it is worth noting the unusual weights of coins 12 and 13 (4.20 gm and 5.60 gm respectively), and the unusual design of the latter, with its double portrait. It is quite possible that this coin is a modern fabrication. The flan is slightly wavy and the reverse is so flat as to suggest the coin was cast. The two portraits are somewhat distinct from one another and I suspect two actual coins may have been used to construct the mould. Indeed, the right side portrait seems to be die identical to the image on coin 12. This casts some doubt on coin 12 as well, with its own unusual weight, but I have not examined this coin in hand. Coin 11, however, and another example of this type that had been posted on the zeno.ru website do seem genuine and represent a previously unpublished type. These alone could constitute the bridge from the last coins of Khiṅgila to the “*rājā lakhāna*” coins.

Coin 14 (Göbl type 80) is a well-known type that seems very closely related to the last Khiṅgila issue (Göbl type 81, coin 10 in the Table) and also to coins 11 and 15. Stylistically, all these coins are very close, both in the portrait style with the crescent tips on the shoulders and the depiction of the crown and the wavy diadem ends. After the death of Khiṅgila, there may have been no king who felt strong enough to put his own name on the coinage, and that could explain the anonymous *ṣāhi lakhāna* we saw on coin 11 and the *alchono* (in Bactrian) *rājā lakhāna* (in Brāhmī) that we see on coin 14. Alternatively, maybe a challenger to Khiṅgila arose late in his reign, and issued these anonymous coins in order to keep a relatively low profile. This coin also replaces the sun/wheel symbol with a trident. Who Raja Lakhāna was is hard to say.

The next coin in the series is coin 15 (Göbl type 79). This also is closely related to coins 10-14 on stylistic grounds, but presents a new legend in Brāhmī: *rājā lakhāna udayāditya*. Thus we clearly have a new king Udayāditya. His coins differ from previous types in that all symbols and the shoulder crescent tips are eliminated but the style is so close to both the Khiṅgila and the Raja Lakhāna coins that it was surely created at the same mint and most probably by the same hand. Indeed, it might be reasonable to suppose that Udayāditya was the issuer of the Raja Lakhāna coins, given that his own legend reads *rājā lakhāna udayāditya*. Perhaps he did not feel confident placing his name on the coinage until later in his reign.

The final coin that is clearly in the Khiṅgila series is coin 16 (Göbl type 82). Like the coins of Udayāditya, this coin carries no symbols and a legend entirely in Brāhmī that reads *jayatu ṣāhi javūvლაჲ*. It is stylistically a very close relation of the Udayāditya coins; the one notable difference is the presence of a pearled hoop ear-ring as opposed to the double drop ear-rings seen on virtually all other Alchon coins. Other than this and, of course, the legend, this coin looks like it could be an Udayāditya issue because of the similarity of the portraits. Melzer,<sup>12</sup> denying Göbl’s rendition, reads the legend on this coin as *jayatu ṣāhi javūḥkhaჲ*, but this is surely incorrect, as the detail image in Table 2 makes very clear. The legend is doubtless *jayatu ṣāhi javūvლაჲ*, as Göbl had read it.

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<sup>12</sup> Melzer, *op. cit.*, footnote 77 on p. 261.

We naturally would like to know who issued this coin. With her reading, Melzer would assign this coin to Javūkha, but it seems quite clear that her reading is not correct. Vondrovec,<sup>13</sup> while accepting Göbl's reading *ṣāhi javūvlah*, still assigns the coin to Javūkha, without providing any further explanation for this attribution. Alram and Pfisterer<sup>14</sup> illustrate the coin as an issue of Javūkha too, but they also provide no further details or explanation. I feel it is hard to make a case for this to be an issue of Javūkha. We illustrate known coins of Javūkha later in Table 4, and it is quite apparent that there is little stylistic similarity between those coins and this one. P.L. Gupta<sup>15</sup> assigned the type to Toramāṇa. Although he does not say so explicitly, he implies that his reason is the fact that, in the Kurā stone inscription, Toramāṇa is referred to as *maharaja-toramāṇa-ṣāha-jaūvlah*.<sup>16</sup> However, as we will see later, coin 16 bears no stylistic similarity to coins in the Toramāṇa series either and the title *jaūvlah* or *javūvlah* could have been adopted by other kings. We saw in coin 5 the use by Khiṅgila of the title written in Bactrian as *zoobl*, which is surely the same word. Thus I think it is doubtful that coin 16 was issued by either Javūkha or Toramāṇa. It belongs near the end of the Khiṅgila series and was probably issued by a king succeeding Udayāditya.

## The Toramāṇa Series

In his study, Vondrovec left Toramāṇa out of the analysis because “no silver drachms bearing this name are known.”<sup>17</sup> Of course, this is not strictly true, as silver drachms of the Gupta style (Göbl type 119) do bear Toramāṇa's name, but Vondrovec's essential point is well-taken: there are no known “Alchon” style drachms of this king. However, there are known copper coins of Toramāṇa that bear a bust in the style of the Alchon coins and these reveal something very interesting. We therefore begin the Toramāṇa series (Table 3) with a copper coin (coin 17, Göbl type 120) of that king.

What is most interesting about this coin is that the portrait style is most similar to the one in coin 1 (Table 1), from the early anonymous series, or perhaps coin 6 (Table 2), a very early Khiṅgila type. The bust is bare-headed, with no diadem, crown, or crescent ornament, the head is elongated, and there are ribbons attached to the king's necklace. In these respects, the portrait is like the one in coin 1. One apparent difference is that there appear to be elements that look somewhat like the “wings” or “fly-whisks” on the shoulders, as on coin 6. Thus it appears that Toramāṇa's coinage drew inspiration from the very early Khiṅgila types. This seems to suggest that Toramāṇa commenced his coinage before Khiṅgila issued his later types such as coins 9 and 10; in other words, Toramāṇa's coinage was probably somewhat in parallel with Khiṅgila's.

In his description of the type 120 coins, Göbl said “Im übrigen bewahren die AE offenbar die ältere Tradition, wonach die Halskette das wichtigere Herrschaftssymbol war,”<sup>18</sup> thereby providing an explanation for the old portrait style. But Göbl thought that Toramāṇa was

<sup>13</sup> Vondrovec, *op. cit.*, p. 46.

<sup>14</sup> Alram and Pfisterer, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

<sup>15</sup> Parmeshwari Lal Gupta: *Coins (India-The Land and its People)*, New Delhi: National Book Trust, fourth edition, 1996, p. 78.

<sup>16</sup> Dines Chandra Sircar: *Select Inscriptions Bearing on Indian History and Civilization*, Vol. 1, Delhi: V.K. Publishing House, 1991, p. 424.

<sup>17</sup> Vondrovec, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

<sup>18</sup> Göbl, *op. cit.*, Band I, p. 103.

Khiṅgila's son, and therefore felt the need to explain how coins issued supposedly after Khiṅgila's death nevertheless reflected styles that belonged to early in Khiṅgila's reign. However, we now know with a fair degree of certainty that Toramāṇa was not Khiṅgila's son. If he had been, the Schøyen copper scroll surely would have mentioned that fact, since it mentions the names of four fathers in the inscription.<sup>19</sup> Thus there is no reason to presume that Toramāṇa's coins were sequentially later than those of Khiṅgila. It is far more likely that the early style exhibited in Toramāṇa's coins reflects the fact that Khiṅgila's late coins had not yet been issued. That is why it seems useful to treat the Toramāṇa series as running parallel to at least the latter part of the Khiṅgila series.

We know that Mihirakula was Toramāṇa's son and we also know that Mihirakula issued silver drachms with the Sasanian style fabric. Coin 18 (Göbl type 310) is an example of such a coin and is the next coin in the Toramāṇa series. So far, this is the earliest silver coin that we know of in this series. We see that the Mihirakula coin has quite a distinctive style that separates it from any of the coins of the Khiṅgila series. Notable aspects of this style include:

1. A distinctive round-top crown with a prominent brim and crescent forehead ornament.
2. A Brāhmī legend that is written in a continuous arc over the king's head, rather than being interrupted by the head.
3. The absence of the bull/lunar tamgha.
4. The presence of *two* prominent symbols, one in the right field and one in the left. Here we have a beribboned trident and a *cakra*-standard.

**Table 3: The Toramāṇa Series**

Coin 17 (#663.21)		<i>"tora"</i> Göbl type 120 3.16 gm, 22 mm
Coin 18 (#568.3)		<i>"jayatu mihirakula"</i> Göbl type 310 3.33 gm, 25 mm

<sup>19</sup> The inscription mentions (1) Opanda, the father of the principal donor, the Tālagānika-Devaputra-Śāhi, (2) Buddh..., the Sārada- Śāhi, father of the principal donor's wife, (3) Ho..gaya, father of the mistress of a great monastery Arccavāmanā, and (4) Sādavīkha, father of the great king Javūkha; see Melzer, *op. cit.*, p. 274.



Coin 19 (Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna)		<i>“jayatu baysara khota laka”</i> Göbl type 108 (details n.a.)
Coin 20 (British Museum, 1912.1214)		<i>“jayatu baysara”</i> Göbl type 109 3.70 gm
Coin 21 (#537.7)		<i>“jayatu bhāraṇa”</i> Unpublished (3.59 gm, 27.5 mm)
Coin 22 (#606.2)		<i>“śāhi vaiṣṛavaṇasya”</i> Göbl type xxx 3.82 gm, 25 mm

Note: Image of coin 19 from the online exhibition *Das Anlitz des Fremden* of the Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna: <http://pro.geo.univie.ac.at/projects/khm/showcases/showcase9?language=en>, downloaded May 1, 2013. Image of coin 20 © Trustees of the British Museum, used by permission.

The coin does share with coins from the Khingila series the lunar crescents on the king’s shoulders, which had made an appearance some time mid-way through Khingila’s reign. This perhaps speaks to at least some level of exchange between Khingila’s mints and those of the Toramāṇa series.

Following Mihirakula, there were at least two other kings whose coins can definitively be assigned to this series, and perhaps a third. Coin 19 (Göbl type 108) is a coin of the king Bazara

(or Bazāra, Vazāra or Bazira). The legend on this coin reads *jayatu baysara khota laka*. It is worth remembering that the conjoined letter *ysa* stands for the sound *za*,<sup>20</sup> so the king's name would be Bazara. One coin has a diacritic that renders the name *baysāra*. On another example of type 111, Göbl read the name as *vaysāra*, which would yield a name of Vazāra, and Harry Falk has argued for *baysira* on philological grounds,<sup>21</sup> which would make the name Bazira.

Regardless of the exact name, it is quite clear that these coins belong in the Toramāṇa series, as they have all the distinctive characteristics listed in the previous paragraph: the round-top crown with prominent brim, the Brāhmī legend running continuously over the king's head, the two prominent symbols, and the lack of the bull/lunar tamgha. The coin also has the shoulder lunar crescents seen on Mihirakula's coins. The symbols here are a fire altar at right, reminiscent of a symbol seen on the coins of Mehama (see coins 23 and 24 in Table 4 below) and a crescent-topped swastika at left.

Coin 20 (Göbl type 110) is another coin of the same king and has all the characteristics of the series, except for one: this coin has only one prominent symbol. The symbol at left has been eliminated here. The symbol at right is now a sun or wheel type symbol mounted on a stand. This symbol provides a link to the next coin in the series.

Coin 21 is a previously unpublished type of a king named Bhāraṇa. This coin has all the distinctive characteristics of coins of this series, including a return to the dual symbols. The legend reads *jayatu bhāraṇa* and the two symbols in this case are the sun or wheel symbol mounted on a stand at right (as on coin 20) and a conch shell at left. Because of the congruence of the sun/wheel symbol, it seems logical to place this coin after the coin of Bazara. One feature of the Bhāraṇa coin that is unusual is that the fire altar on the reverse is very wide, with correspondingly very small attendants on either side.

The last coin I have included in the Toramāṇa series is coin 22 (Göbl type 139). Although this coin type has been known for a while, the legend has not yet been adequately read because of the lack of a legible example. This coin provides the best legend yet seen, and I am reading it as *śāhi vaiśravaṇasya*.<sup>22</sup> If this is correct, we can identify this king for the first time as Vaiśravaṇa.<sup>23</sup> Although his coins are stylistically not that close to other coins in the Toramāṇa series, they are not stylistically close to coins of any of the other groups either, so it is problematic to assign his coins to any particular group. I feel, however, that the best decision is to include these in the Toramāṇa series for three reasons:

1. The legend on the coin draws a continuous arc over the king's head, a feature not seen on coins of any other series.
2. The coin features two prominent symbols, here a trident (as on Mihirakula's coins) at right and an unusual symbol at left that has been identified by Göbl as a fly-whisk and by Pfisterer as a three-headed snake, which seems the more likely interpretation.
3. A key symbol seen on most coins of all the other series, the bull/lunar tamgha, is missing here, as on the other coins of the Toramāṇa series.

<sup>20</sup> See the detailed discussion on this point in Pankaj Tandon: "The Western Kshatrapa Dāmazāda," *The Numismatic Chronicle* 169, 2009, pp. 173-187.

<sup>21</sup> Private communication.

<sup>22</sup> Thanks to Shailendra Bhandare and Harry Falk for their help with the reading.

<sup>23</sup> This is a well-attested name and there was a Magha king with this name; see Gupta, *op. cit.*, p. 50.

These factors suggest that this coin is closely related to other coins in the Toramāṇa series, despite the differences in style.

## Coins of Mehama

The third king mentioned in the Schøyen copper scroll donor list is Mehama. For the first time, we can be sure of this king's name, since there was ambiguity in the name on the legends of his coins, which had been read by Göbl variously as *mepāmā*, *mipāmā* or *mapāmā*. Now, with more coins with clearer legends and the Schøyen copper scroll, we can be sure that his name was actually Mehama.

I have been unable to find coins of any king other than Mehama that I could place unequivocally into a "series" with his coins, but I do feel there is evidence that Mehama's coinage was issued in parallel with Khiṅgila's and not sequentially. Table 4 shows five coins of Mehama, two of which are unpublished, which shed light on this king's coinage and its evolution.

The first coin is coin 23 (Göbl type 316), which clearly names the king Mehama. Vondrovec had published a coin of this type and identified it as a "Later Stage" coin, but did not provide his reasons for why he thought it was issued late in Mehama's reign. I would like to propose that this marks an *early* coin of Mehama, because the tall head is more pronouncedly "tall" and, more important, the bust is bare-headed, lacks any diadem with its hanging diadem ends, and instead has ribbons attached to the king's necklace. In these respects, the coin is similar to coins of the Early Anonymous Series or the earliest coins of Khiṅgila. It therefore seems likely that this coin was issued some time during Khiṅgila's reign, perhaps before any of his late, crowned coins were issued. Coin 25 provides further strong support for this argument and I will come to this later.

Coin 24 (Göbl type 71), is a variant of the previous coin. It is similar to coin 23 in that the king's bust is bare-headed and the coin features a fire altar at right and a bull/lunar tamgha at left. But it is not clear if there are any ribbons attached to the necklace as the tamgha has occupied that position on the coin. Another key difference from the previous coin is that this one has a crude style and the legend is blundered. It therefore seems that, in the early phase of Mehama's coinage, there may have been two different series being issued: a fine style series epitomized by coin 23 and a crude style series illustrated by coin 24. We will see a similar division of styles in the later coinage. Perhaps these were the products of different mints or at least were the work of different die-cutters.

Coin 25, previously unpublished, seems to be a transitional issue between the early and the late phases and I believe is an important coin for an understanding of Mehama's coinage. This coin has a fine style similar to that of coin 22, there are ribbons attached to the king's necklace and the letter *ha* in the king's name is well formed. But this coin differs from the previous ones in that the fire altar in the right field has been replaced by the bull/lunar tamgha and the left field is blank. Indeed, it appears that the die originally did have a different element (probably the fire altar) underneath where the tamgha is now, and that there was another element (probably the tamgha) in the left field which was erased from the die. Thus the die was probably



**Table 4: Coins of Mehama**

Coin 23 (#603.3)		<i>“ṣāhi mehama”</i> Göbl type 316 3.94 gm, 29 mm
Coin 24 (CNG Electronic Auction 110, lot 83)		<i>“ṣaha mapama”</i> Göbl type 316 var 3.42 gm, 29 mm
Coin 25 (665.58)		<i>“ṣāhi mehama”</i> Unpublished 2.88 gm, 28 mm
Coin 26 (#655.51)		<i>“ṣāhi mehama”</i> Unpublished 3.15 gm, 29 mm



Note: Image of coin 24 reproduced with permission from CNG.

similar to the die for coin 23 originally but was then modified. Why it was modified in this way is not clear. It is possible that a decision was made to change the design and an existing die was modified to reflect that change. This coin is therefore a powerful piece of evidence supporting the idea that the coin types with the fire altar and tamgha *preceded* the coin types with fire altar alone. In much the same way as an overstruck coin proves that the overtype was chronologically later than the undertype, it shows that the single-symbol coins came later than the double-symbol coins.

Coins 26 and 27 are the late stage coins of Mehama reflecting the fine and crude styles. Coin 26 is a previously unpublished type that is the fine style version of the late coins. The king now wears a diadem with crescent ornaments and hanging diadem ends. The waviness of the diadem ends recalls the similar treatment of these elements in the last coins of Kṛiṅgila (see coin 10), the coins of Rājā Lakhāṇa (coin 14) and especially the coins of Udayāditya (coin 15). Thus these coins appear to be related and may have been issued in roughly the same time frame. The late stage coin also features only a tamgha at right and no additional element in the left field.

The last coin of Mehama, coin 27, is the familiar “*mepama*” coinage (Göbl type 74), which is just the crude style version of the previous coin. This coin has no obvious successor, so it is possible Mehama’s kingdom may have been absorbed into another one.

Where exactly Mehama’s kingdom was is something that is unknown and a matter of some disagreement. In her translation of and commentary on the Schøyen copper scroll, Melzer suggested that Mehama’s realm must have been north of the Hindu Kush mountains. The stupa being celebrated in the inscription was located in the realm of the *tālagānikadevaputraṣāhi*, indicating a place called Tālagān. Melzer suggested that this might be a town called today Tālaqān, which is in northern Afghanistan.<sup>24</sup> However, de la Vaissière<sup>25</sup> has argued persuasively that it was rather the town of Talagang in Pakistan, just north of the Salt Range and south of the Hindu Kush. Although this sort of evidence is hardly conclusive, suppliers of the coins of Mehama have told me that his coins are found south of the Hindu Kush. For example, coin 25 was reportedly found along with a couple of other coins of Mehama near the town of Jalalabad, which is in the Kabul valley. This would support a southern location for Mehama’s kingdom.

<sup>24</sup> Melzer, *op. cit.*, p. 256.

<sup>25</sup> de la Vaissière, *op. cit.*, p. 129.



## The Javūkha Series

Javūkha was the fourth king to be named in the Schøyen copper scroll. The coins with the Brāhmī legend *javūkha* can and have been grouped by some authors with the coins that carry the Bactrian legend *zabocho*. Whether these coins were issued by two different kings (Javūkha and Zabocho) or whether these were all the issues of a single king is a matter that has been discussed and continues to be debated. I would like to argue that these coins were indeed all issues of the same king, and I present new evidence in favor of this argument. I have not been able to define with any clarity the coins that would have preceded Javūkha's, but present some ideas on their antecedents. The coins of the series are presented in Table 5.

We begin with the coins that carry the Brāhmī legend *śāhi javūkha* and variants thereof. Coin 28 is an example of Göbl type 49 that carries this legend, although the letters *śā* and *hi* are positioned in a very unusual manner. The bust of the king on this coin wears a diadem with the hanging ends and the forehead crescent ornament, so no direct link to the early anonymous coins can be drawn. There are two symbols on the coin: a beribboned club at right and the bull/lunar tamgha at left. Overall, in terms of style, these coins seem to be quite similar to the early coins of Khiṅgila such as coin 7 in Table 2 (Göbl type 61), although they feature crescent tips on the shoulders instead of the wings seen on coin 7. The shoulder crescent tips were a feature of the late Khiṅgila coins such as coin 10 (Göbl type 81), but were not present on the later coins of the Khiṅgila series, such as the coins of “Rājā Lakhāna” and Udayāditya. Javūkha's coins, therefore, may have been issued sometime late in Khiṅgila's reign, perhaps contemporaneously with coins such as coin 10 (Göbl type 81) but before coins such as 14 (Rājā Lakhāna) and 15 (Udayāditya).

**Table 5: The Javūkha/Zabocho Series**

Coin 28 (#656.32)		<i>“śāhi javūkha”</i> Göbl type 49 3.16 gm, 30 mm
Coin 29 (#644.86)		<i>“śāhi jaūkha”</i> Göbl type 51 3.16 gm, 29.5 mm



Coin 30 (#616.24)		<i>“jaya šāhi ?”</i> Göbl type 52 3.44 gm, 29 mm
Coin 31 (#513.07)		<i>“šāhi javūkha”</i> Göbl type 117 3.16 gm, 20 mm
Coin 32 (#513.06)		<i>“šāhi javūkha”</i> Göbl type 117 var 3.30 gm, 21 mm 
Coin 33 (#449.01)		<i>“... zabocho”</i> Göbl type 96 3.54 gm, 23 mm
Coin 34 (#327.06)		<i>“... zabocho”</i> Göbl type 96A 3.46 gm, 23 mm

<p>Coin 35 (#587.12)</p>		<p><i>“zabocho ...”</i> Göbl type 106 3.20 gm, 22 mm</p>
<p>Coin 36 (#641.22)</p>		<p><i>“ṣāhi javū(kha)”</i> Unpublished 3.04 gm, 23 mm</p> 
<p>Coin 37 (private collection)</p>		<p><i>“mirosoṇoṣoo oomono”</i> Göbl type 86 Weight n.a., 31 mm</p>
<p>Coin 38 (British Museum)</p>		<p><i>“mirosoṇoṣoo oomono”</i> Göbl type 86 3.77 gm, 23 mm</p>
<p>Coin 39 (#327.07)</p>		<p><i>“trilo(ka)”</i> Göbl type 115 3.44 gm, 23 mm</p>



Coin 40 (British Museum)		<i>“pūrvvāditya”</i> Göbl type 92 3.63 gm, 21 mm
Coin 41 (#499.2)		<i>“śrī”</i> Göbl type 150 3.76 gm, 27 mm

Note: Image of coin 37 from the online exhibition *Das Anlitz des Fremden* of the Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna: <http://pro.geo.univie.ac.at/projects/khm/showcases/showcase8?language=en>, downloaded May 1, 2013. Images of coins 38 and 40 © Trustees of the British Museum, used by permission.

Coin 29 (Göbl type 51) is very similar to coin 28 in both style and content, but it differs in an important respect: the name of the king is spelled here *jaūkha* rather than *javūkha*. This points to an important conclusion: the name, being a foreign one, did not have a clear spelling in Brāhmī. When considering whether the names Javūkha (or Jaūkha), written in Brāhmī, and Zabocho, written in Bactrian, are the same or different, this is a useful fact to keep in mind. We will return to this point later.

Coin 30 (Göbl type 52) appears to have a blundered legend that Göbl had read as *jaya śāhi*. Since the coin does not name a king, we cannot attribute it definitively, but it appears to belong with the previous two coins on stylistic ground, and therefore might tentatively be attributed to Javūkha. Other than the legend, all its other characteristics conform to Javūkha's coins, except that the club in the right field has here been replaced by a conch shell. The significance of this will become apparent when we consider the “Zabocho” coinage.

Coins 31 and 32 are examples of a radically new type introduced by Javūkha, a horseman type inspired perhaps by the horseman type coins of the Gupta kings. Coin 31 (Göbl type 117) features the same club symbol carried by Javūkha's bust type coins. Coin 32 also carries that symbol, but is an unpublished variety with a different legend arrangement. The king's name is inscribed in retrograde letters, as seen in the detail image.

Coins 33-35 are examples of coins distinguished by the presence on them of a legend in Bactrian letters that names a king *zabocho*. The similarity of this name to the name *javūkha* naturally leads to the question of whether they were really the same name that had to be written differently when using different scripts. To begin with, Brāhmī has no letter for the sound *z*, and the letter *ja* is often used as a substitute. For example, some of the coins of the Western

Kshatrapa king Dāmazāda are inscribed in Brāhmī letters with the name *dāmajāda*.<sup>26</sup> We have already seen that the second consonant in the name Javūkha was somewhat ambiguous, since the name is spelled *jaūkha* on some coins, and it is worth noting that this was not caused by a “missing” letter *va*; the spelling was consciously different. Neither Brāhmī nor Bactrian had a letter for the sound *wa*, and it seems entirely possible that the syllable *wū* could be represented by the letter *vū* or *ū* in Brāhmī and *bo* in Bactrian. Thus a strong case can be made for arguing that these coins were all issued by the same king, whose name could perhaps have been Zawūkh or Zawokh. Nicholas Sims-Williams indeed treats *javūkha* and *zabocho* as alternative spellings of the same name.<sup>27</sup>

This case can be further strengthened by noting that the horse-rider type is known only for the “two” kings Javūkha and Zabocho. Coin 35 (Göbl type 106) is an example of the Zabocho horse-rider type, which features a conch shell symbol that echoes the one on coin 30, which is probably of Javūkha. The horse-rider coins create a strong link between the coins of these two series.

The one argument against concluding that the coins of Javūkha and Zabocho are issues of the same king is that the bust type coins of Zabocho seem radically different from the bust type coins of Javūkha. Coins 33 and 34 (Göbl types 96 and 96A) are examples of the bust type of the Zabocho coins and it is apparent that they are quite different stylistically from coins 28-30. Apart from the obvious difference in portrait style, the Zabocho coins are on much smaller flans, approximately 23 mm in diameter compared to the roughly 30 mm Javūkha coins. Vondrovec has summarized this argument against the “one king” theory: “All coin types with the ζαβοχο legend seem to belong to a very distinct group with the same style of die-engraving. Their diameter is also considerably smaller than those of the portrait types by Javūkha.”<sup>28</sup> A similar posture is adopted by Errington.<sup>29</sup>

Coin 36 is a previously unpublished coin that provides a response to this objection to the identity of Javūkha and Zabocho, as it constitutes an important bridge between the coins of these two groups. The coin has the same small format of the Zabocho coins, the king wears a crown very similar to the one on those coins, and the symbol at right is the double-diamond shape of a thunderbolt, as on coin 34 of Zabocho. But the legend on the coin is in Brāhmī and names Javūkha. Note the similarity of the letter forms with those on coin 32. Thus this coin is clearly an issue of Javūkha, and demonstrates a style and format similar to the Zabocho coins, providing an important new link between the two series.

A final argument in favor of treating Javūkha and Zabocho as the same king is that the coins of the next king in the series, Aduman, also come in two formats, large and small. Coins 37 and 38 (Göbl type 86) are two examples of this king’s coins. They carry a club symbol at right very similar to the symbol on Javūkha’s coins and they are known in a 31 mm size as well as a

<sup>26</sup> See Tandon, *op. cit.*, for a detailed discussion.

<sup>27</sup> Nicholas Sims-Williams: *Bactrian Personal Names* (Iranisches Personennamenbuch II/7), Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2010, number 139.

<sup>28</sup> Vondrovec, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

<sup>29</sup> Elizabeth Errington: “Differences in the Patterns of Kidarite and Alkhon Coin Distribution at Begram and Kashmir Smast,” in Michael Alram, *et. al.* (eds): *Coins, Art and Chronology II*, Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2010, pp. 147-168.



23 mm size. If the differences in the formats of the coins of Javūkha and Zabocho can be explained by their production at different mints, which seems like a reasonable explanation, then these two coins indicate that Aduman inherited at least two of these mints and continued coin production in each using the previous formats. The presence of the club symbol and the existence of these two formats suggest that Aduman indeed followed Javūkha.

Coins 39 (Göbl type 115) and 40 (Göbl type 92) are representative examples of the coins of two more kings who belong in the Javūkha series: Triloka (or Bhaloka)<sup>30</sup> and Pūrvvāditya. Both these coins are in the small format of the Zabocho coins and carry the rosette on lotus symbol seen on coin 33. The Triloka/Bhaloka coin has the same portrait style as the Zabocho coin as well, with its sharp, pointed nose. The Pūrvvāditya coin, on the other hand, inherits the snub-nosed style portrait seen on the coins of Aduman. They clearly belong in this series.

These last two coins also share another common feature: a new style of crown with two crescent ornaments. The crown on coin 33 and other coins in the Zabocho series featured a large crescent on the top of the crown in addition to the usual small crescent at the forehead. On the coins of Triloka and Pūrvvāditya the large crescent above seems to have disappeared, but there are now two small crescents ornamenting the diadem, one at the forehead and one further back. This new style of crown then leads directly to the style on the last coins of the series, which were assigned by Göbl to a king named Narendra. Coin 41 (Göbl type 150) is an example of one of these coins. From the analysis here, we see that these coins seem to follow logically from the other coins of the Javūkha series.

## Conclusion

In this paper, I have sought to divide the Alchon coinage into at least five different series in order to better understand its evolution. The first series consists of early anonymous coins which cannot be assigned to any individual ruler in the present state of our knowledge. The other four series are anchored by the four kings named in the Schøyen copper scroll inscription: Khīngīla, Toramāna, Mehama and Javūkha. Even if, as de la Vaissière maintains in opposition to Melzer's suggestion, these four kings were not all alive and reigning at the same time, I have argued that it is useful to consider their coinages as parallel, rather than sequential, series. At least three of the series seem to have their origins in the early anonymous coins and so it is quite possible that they evolved independently. Considerations of style allow us to assign various other kings to one or the other of these four series. Each of the series may well have been the output of a separate mint or group of mints.

The purpose of the paper was not to create a new ordering of all known Alchon coins, but only to suggest an approach or framework for doing so. The bigger task lies ahead. I would hope that my paper may make a small contribution to approaching this task.

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<sup>30</sup> The reading of the name as *Triloka* is by Göbl. In an email, Pfisterer informed me that he reads the name as *Bhaloka*.