

A New Coin of Amyntas and some Apollopahnes Forgeries

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This brief note brings to notice three Indo-Greek coins, seen at the New York International Numismatic Convention in January 2017 and January 2018.

Amyntas AE quadruple



Figure 1: AE quadruple (?) of Amyntas
(Tandon collection #688.72)

The first coin, a bronze quadruple unit of Amyntas, is illustrated in Figure 1 and can be described as follows:

Obverse: City goddess, perhaps Tyche, standing three-quarters left, wearing tall head-dress (crown?), holding cornucopia in left arm and crown in outstretched right hand; Greek legend around:
ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΝΟΤΣ /
ΝΙΚΑΤΟΡΟΥ // ΑΜΥΝΤΟΥ.

Reverse: Humped bull standing right on a linear ground line, ☩ monogram below, Kharoshthi legend around: *maharajasa / jayadharasa / amitasa*.

Details: Weight: 6.19 gm,
Dimensions: 20 x 19 mm
Die axis: 12 o'clock.

When looking at an entirely new type that has not been discovered in an archaeological context, it behooves us to look at it very critically. This coin has several problems that would lead us to doubt its authenticity. First, the weight (6.19 gm) is really too low for a quadruple and too high for a double unit. The occasional Indo-Greek quadruple whose weight falls this low tends to be quite worn; this coin, however, is in relatively pristine condition. Second, the first word in the obverse legend is ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΝΟΤΣ, rather than the usual ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ("king"). Presumably, this is a mis-spelling of ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΟΝΤΟΣ, which would mean "in the reign of." While this would be an acceptable term on a coin, it had been used in the Graeco-Bactrian world only by Agathocles and Antimachus in their pedigree coins;² it had never been used by a king on his own coinage and, in any case, had not been seen on any Indo-Greek coin for some 70 years.³ Its use on this coin, therefore, seems rather odd. Third, the obverse Greek legend would be expected to be continuous; however, here the last word, ΑΜΥΝΤΟΥ, reverses direction and must be read from the outside rather than the inside of the coin. We of course see such reversals of direction in all of the Indo-Greek silver coinage, and also sometimes in the bronze coinage. For example, there are bronze coins of Menander I and Zoilus I which have this feature.⁴ However, in all these cases, the reversal of direction takes place

² See Osmund Bopearachchi: *Monnaies Gréco-Bactriennes et Indo-Grecques*, Paris: Bibliothèque Nationale, 1991, Agathocle, Séries 12-18, and Antimaque (I) Théos, Séries 9-10.

³ Bopearachchi dates Antimachus to c. 175-165 BCE and Amyntas to c. 95-90 BCE.

⁴ Bopearachchi, *ibid.*, Ménandre (I) Sôter, Séries 17, 21, Zoile I, Série 6.

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when the king's name appears in the exergue, so that it can be read while holding the coin in its normal orientation. Here, the king's name is along the right side border.

For all these reasons, one must be somewhat skeptical about this coin. Against these factors, however, it should be noted that the style of the devices and the lettering on the coin is absolutely consistent with other coins of the period, the monogram is the usual one seen on much of the coinage of Amyntas, and the scratch marks on the coin are consistent with its having been vigorously cleaned of encrustations. Further, the high quality carving of the dies would indicate that, if the coin is a forgery, it was made by a highly skilled and knowledgeable person. Would such a person have made the rather elementary "mistakes" outlined in the previous paragraph? It seems unlikely. It is worth noting that the city goddess also made an appearance on some of Amyntas's silver coinage (Bopearachchi, Série 2).

I therefore feel that the coin is probably genuine. If so, we can look into its significance. The type follows the most common bronze type of Philoxenos (c. 100-95 BCE), an example of which is illustrated in Figure 2. The obverse of the Philoxenos features a city goddess three-quarters to left, holding a cornucopia, and delivering a blessing with the right hand; the reverse depicts a humped bull right. Thus the Amyntas coin departs from the Philoxenos coin in that the goddess offers a crown rather than a benediction. This suggests that the Amyntas coin commemorates a victory and this notion is reinforced by the choice of epithet, NIKATOP ("victor").

At the risk of perhaps looking too far into the significance of an individual coin, let us ask: Who might Amyntas have defeated? This is a difficult question to

answer, because the chronology of the Indo-Greek kings is not at all settled. The monogram on the coin doesn't help at all either, because it is the monogram used for the first time by Amyntas.⁵ There are at least three different competing proposals for the late Indo-Greek chronology and I will consider these in turn.



Figure 2: AE coin of Philoxenos⁶

In the chronology proposed by Bopearachchi,⁷ Amyntas succeeded Philoxenos in all the areas where he ruled. This would suggest that the king defeated by Amyntas was in fact Philoxenos, and the fact that this "victory" coin follows the type of Philoxenos might be seen as supporting this conclusion.

On the other hand, Senior and MacDonald proposed a chronology in which Amyntas succeeded Heliocles II,⁸ and so it is possible that Heliocles II was the king defeated by Amyntas. This notion can be supported by at least two additional pieces of information. First, we know of at least one coin of Heliocles II that was

⁵ It is not hard to see that this monogram could be formed by the letters in the name AMYNTAS being written one on top of the other.

⁶ Bopearachchi type 10D; photo, courtesy Classical Numismatic Group, sale 84, lot 799 (8.60gm, 20mm, 12h).

⁷ Bopearachchi, *ibid.*, p. 453.

⁸ R.C. Senior and D. MacDonald: *The Decline of the Indo-Greeks: A re-appraisal of the chronology from the time of Menander to that of Azes*, Monographs of the Hellenic Numismatic Society 2, Athens, 1998, p. 57.

overstruck by Amyntas,⁹ and that suggests a possible direct link between the two kings. Second, as pointed out by Bopearachchi, Amyntas “apparently inherited … the important monogram Χ… from Heliocles II.”¹⁰ That monogram was not used at all by Philoxenos, which suggests that, at least in some areas, Amyntas succeeded Heliocles II directly rather than after Philoxenos. In this interpretation, Amyntas would be an ally of Philoxenos, and his use of the Philoxenos type could thereby be explained.

Senior subsequently revised his chronology of the Indo-Greek kings,¹¹ but this does not affect the previous discussion, as he still has Amyntas following Heliocles II in at least part of his territory.

Third, Jakobsson’s chronology¹² has Amyntas succeeding Archebios. Despite this, however, Jakobsson acknowledges that Amyntas, rather than Archebios, “may have been the one who drove [Heliocles II] out of the Punjab,”¹³ which would support the conclusion reached in the previous paragraph.

A final possibility is that Amyntas was vying with Scythians of the family of Vonones, who were making inroads into northern India at around this time. Finally settling this question depends upon a much

more detailed analysis, which is beyond the scope of this note and maybe even of any deeper analysis.

The foregoing discussion was based on the assumption that the coin under discussion was an official issue of Amyntas. In a private electronic message, Jens Jakobsson suggested to me in passing that the coin may have been an unofficial issue. I find this suggestion attractive. It would explain the use of the term ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΝΟΤΣ on the coin, as an unofficial issue would not be a coin of Amyntas but only an issue “in the reign of” Amyntas. The other anomalies on the coin might also be more understandable, and the rarity of the coin would be a direct consequence of the fact that it was a special, probably one-off, issue. The use of the figure of a city goddess would then suggest that the coin was a civic issue, perhaps of a city that surrendered to Amyntas (hence the goddess offering the crown). If this theory is true, it is perhaps most likely that the previous ruler of the city would have been Philoxenos, whose type served as the model for this coin. This theory would then provide a mild support to Bopearachchi’s chronology.

Probable Forged AE coins of Apollophanes



Figure 3: AE sextuple (?) of Apollophanes ? (in trade)

The second coin I wish to present is one that purports to be a bronze sextuple of Apollophanes. It was seen at the 2017 New York coin show. If genuine, this would be the first known AE coin of that

⁹ See R.C. Senior and S. Mirza: “An Indo-Greek Overstrike,” ONS Newsletter No. 149 (Summer 1996), p. 5.

¹⁰ *Sylloge Nummorum Graecorum: The Collection of the American Numismatic Society*, New York, 1998, opposite Plate 52.

¹¹ Robert C. Senior: “The Indo-Greek and Indo-Scythian King Sequences in the Second and First Centuries BC,” *Oriental Numismatic Society Newsletter 179 Supplement*, Spring 2004.

¹² Jens Jakobsson: “Relations between the Indo-Greek kings after Menander, Part 2,” *Journal of the Oriental Numismatic Society* 193, Autumn 2007, pp. 8-12.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

king. It is illustrated in Figure 3 and can be described as follows:

Obverse: Apollo standing three-quarters right, holding arrow in both hands, Α monogram at left; Greek legend around:
ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ / ΣΩΤΗΡΟΣ / ΑΠΟΛΛΟΦΑΝΟΥ.

Reverse: Tripod, Kharoshthi letters ՚ (ra) at left and ՚ (ti) at right, Kharoshthi legend around:
maharajasa / tratarasa / apuluphanasa.

Details: Weight: 12.72 gm
Dimensions: 23 x 22 mm
Die axis: 12 o'clock.

Once again, we need to look at this coin with a skeptical eye. There has been a spate of recent forgeries which involve the re-carving of genuine coins with new details in order to make them more marketable.¹⁴ Given the similarity between the names of Apollodotus and Apollophanes, and the fact that Apollodotus II also issued coins with Apollo on the obverse and a tripod on the reverse, I took a close look at the coin to see if the Greek and Kharoshthi legends might have been altered. On both legends, the name of the king does appear somewhat different from the rest of the legend, but I could not find clear evidence that the coin had been altered. I therefore concluded that the coin might be genuine.

After I had written a first draft of this paper, I became aware of two more copper coins of Apollophanes. Shailesh Bhandare pointed out that a coin sold in a

CNG auction (Sale 90, lot 876) as a square Apollo/wreath type of Apollodotus II in fact was clearly a coin of Apollophanes. And Bob Senior has shown me a round coin of a third type that is also an issue of Apollophanes. Bob will be publishing these two coins shortly.

Both of these coins carry Senior's Monogram 4, ՚, ¹⁵ which is the monogram also seen on the silver coins of Apollophanes. Whereas initially I had thought it plausible that the silver coins could have been made in one mint and the coppers in another, it seems unlikely that Apollophanes would produce copper coins at two different mints. The monogram on the coin therefore becomes a piece of evidence arguing for it to be deemed a forgery. In all probability, it was a coin of Apollodotus II that has been modified. The original would have been similar to coins 19 and 20 of the Chakwal hoard,¹⁶ although the weight is somewhat lower. This could be explained by the loss of metal during the process of alteration.

At the January 2018 New York show, I saw another coin purporting to be of Apollophanes and this is presented in Figure 4. The coin is similar in design to the previous one, with a standing Apollo and tripod as the main elements, but this one is round.



Figure 4: AE sextuple (?) of Apollophanes ? (in trade)

¹⁴ See Pankaj Tandon: "A Spate of New Forgeries of Kushan and Parataraja coins," *Journal of the Oriental Numismatic Society* 204, Summer 2010, pp. 17-20, and "Two New Types of Kushan Forgeries," *Journal of the Oriental Numismatic Society* 221, Autumn 2014, pp. 21-22.

¹⁵ See R.C. Senior: *Indo-Scythian Coins and History*, Vol. 4, Supplement, Lancaster and London: Classical Numismatic Group, 2006, p. 130.

¹⁶ See Senior, *ibid.*, pp. 137 and 141.

Details: 12.76 gm, 27 mm.

The coin is rather obviously a forgery. It is probably not a modified coin of Apollodotus. If it were, it would be an example of BN Série 6,¹⁷ and no coin of that series is known with this monogram.¹⁸ The monogram is actually appropriate for Apolophanes. However, the coin is made with new dies (or molds). The forger is obviously not that skilled and this lack of skill is what gives the forgery away. The letters, on both obverse and reverse, are tentative and child-like, as if the die-cutter had to keep looking at a template he was trying to reproduce. The figure of Apollo is also simplified and the forger has mistaken his arrow for a spear that extends over his right shoulder. The name of the king in Kharoshthi is mis-spelled as *apulanasa*. Overall, therefore, it is quite clear that this coin is of modern manufacture.

¹⁷ Boparachchi, *op. cit.*, p. 349.

¹⁸ There was also no coin of Apollodotus II with this monogram in the Chakwal hoard. See Senior, *op. cit.*, p. 135.